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James Lenox.







THE
CHRISTIAN
REMEMBRANCER.

BY
AMBROSE SERLE, ESQ.
AUTHOR OF "HORÆ SOLITARÆ," "THE CHURCH OF GOD," &c.

WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY
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FOURTH EDITION.

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

It is quite possible that a doctrine may at one time have been present to our minds, to the evidence of which we then attended, and the truth of which we did in consequence believe; and yet, in the whole course of our future thoughts, may it never again have occurred to our remembrance. This is quite possible of a doctrine in science; and it may also be conceived of a doctrine in theology, that on one day it may have been the object of faith, and never on any succeeding day be the object of memory. In this case, the doctrine, however important, and though appertaining to the very essence of the gospel, is of no use. It is not enough that we have received the gospel, we must stand in it. And it is not enough that we barely believe it, for we are told, on the highest authority, that unless we keep it in memory, we have believed in vain.

This may lead us to perceive that there is an error in the imaginations of those who think, that, after having understood and acquiesced in Christian truth,

there is an end of all they have to do with it. There is, with many, a most mischievous repose of mind upon this subject. They know that by faith they are saved, and they look to the attainment of this faith as a terminating good, with the possession of which, could they only arrive at it, they would be satisfied; and they regard the articles of a creed in much the same light that they do the articles of a title-deed, which may lie in their repository for years, without once being referred to; and they have the lurking impression, that if this creed were once fairly lodged among the receptacles of the inner man, and only produced in the great day of the examination of passports, it would secure their entry into heaven—just as the title-deed in possession, though never once looked to, guarantees to them a right to all that is conveyed by it. The mental tablet on which are inscribed their articles of belief, is consigned, as it were, to some place of concealment within them, where it lies in a kind of forgotten custody, instead of hanging out to the eye of the mind, and there made the subject of busy and perpetual observation. It is not like a paper filled with the principles and standing rules of a court, and to which there must be a daily reference for the purpose of daily procedure and regulation. It is more, to make use of a law term, like a paper *in retentis*—perhaps making good to them certain privileges which never will be questioned, or ready to be produced on any remote and distant occasion, when such a measure may be called for. Now this is a very great misconception; and whenever we see orthodoxy contentedly slumber-

ing over its fancied acquisitions, and resting securely upon the imagination that all its business is now settled and set by, we may be very sure that it is something like this which lies at the bottom of it.

To rectify this wrong imagination, let it never be forgotten, that every where in the Bible, those truths, by the belief of which we are saved, have this efficacy ascribed to them, not from the mere circumstance of their having once been believed, but after they are believed, from the circumstance of their being constantly adverted to. The belief of them on the one hand is indispensable; for let this be withheld, and the habitual occurrence of the mind to them is of no more use, than would be its constant tendency to dwell on such fancies as it knew to be chimerical. But this habitual occurrence is just as indispensable; for let this be withheld, and the belief of them were of no more use, than would be that of any other salutary truth, forgotten as to the matter of it, and therefore utterly neglected as to its application. The child who is told of his father's displeasure, should he spend that hour in amusement which is required to be spent in scholarship, may believe this at the time of the announcement. But when the hour comes, should the intimation slip from his memory, he has believed in vain. And from the Apostle's declaration, who assures us, that unless we keep the truth in memory we have believed in vain, may we gather what that is which forms the true function and design of the faith that is unto salvation. It is not that, by the bare possession of the doctrines which it appropriates as so many materials, salvation may be

purchased; it is that by the use to which these materials are put, we may come into a state of salvation. It is not that truths lying in a state of dormancy within us, form so many titles in our behalf to the purchased inheritance: it is that truths ever present to the waking faculties of our mind, (and they never can be so without being remembered,) have an influence and a power to make us meet for the inheritance.

On this important truth, so indispensable to secure the saving and salutary influence of the other truths of Christianity, when known and believed, we shall make three observations. The first regards the kind of effort that should be made, either by an inquirer or a Christian, in the business of prosecuting his salvation. The second regards the nature of that salvation. And the third regards the power of the truth, when summoned into the mind's presence by an act of recollection, to keep it in that right train, both of purpose and desire, which prepares and carries it forward to the enjoyment of heaven.

I. With regard to the kind of effort that should be made by an inquirer, he does not, we will venture to say, set earnestly out in quest of salvation without its coming primarily and prominently into his notice, that he is saved by faith. And hence very often a straining of the mind after this acquirement—an anxious endeavour to believe—a repeated attempt to grasp that truth, by the possession of which it is, that we obtain a right to life everlasting; and as the accompaniment of all this, a frequent work of inward search and contemplation, to try if that principle be there, on which there hinges so important a consum-

nation as the favour of God, and the forgiveness of all trespasses. Now it is worth the remarking, on this subject, that there is no such thing as forcing the belief of the mind beyond what it sees of proof and evidence. We may force the mind to attend to a matter; or we may force it to conceive that matter; or we may force it to persevere in thinking and in dwelling upon it: but beyond the light of evidence you cannot force it to any kind of belief about it. Faith is not to be arrived at in this way; and we can no more command the mind to see that to be truth on which the light of evidence does not shine, than we can command the eye to behold the sun through a dark impalpable cloud, that mantles it from human observation. Should a mountain intervene between our eye and some enchanting scene that lies on the other side of it, it is not by any piercing or penetrative effort on the part of the eye, through this solid opaque mass, that we will obtain the sight after which we are aspiring. And yet there is a way of obtaining it. A mere effort of the eye will not do; but the effort of ascending the mountain will do. And, in like manner, a mere straining of the mind after any doctrine, with a view to apprehend it, will never, without the light of evidence, bring that doctrine into the discernment of the mind's eye. But such is the proclaimed importance of belief, as carrying in it an escape from ruin everlasting, and a translation into all the security of acceptance with God, that, to the acquisition of it, the effort of an inquirer is most naturally bent: and he is apt to carry this effort beyond the evidence;

and the effort to behold beyond evidence is of a nature so fruitless and fatiguing, that it harasses the mind, just as any overstretch does toward that which, after all, is an impossibility. And yet there is a line of effort that is productive. There is a path along which the light of evidence will dawn; and that which is impossible to be seen without it, will be seen by it; and that, too, without distortion or unnatural violence upon the faculties. We are bidden seek the pearl of great price, and there must be a way of it. It is quite obvious, and not at all impracticable, to read the Bible with attention, and to wait upon ordinances, and to give vent to the desirousness of our hearts in prayer, and to follow conscience in the discharge of all known duties—and the truth which is unto salvation, and by the knowing and believing of which we acquire everlasting life, a truth that never can be seen while an opaque and impenetrable shroud is upon it, will at length break out into open manifestation. It does not do to be so urged by a sense of the necessity of faith, as to try the impracticability of making faith outrun the evidence. But it does well to be at the post, and along the path of inquiry and exertion, where it is promised that the light of this evidence will be made to shine upon us. If we keep by our duties and our Bibles, like the apostles who kept by Jerusalem till the Holy Ghost was poured upon them, there is not one honest seeker who will not, in time, be a sure and triumphant finder. And we ought to commit ourselves in confidence to this course, assured of the prosperous result that must come out

of it. We ought not to be discomposed by our anxieties about the final attainment. Though the alternative of our heaven or hell hang upon the issues of our seeking to be justified by faith, still we ought not to try and toil to make our faith outrun the light of conviction. It should be our great encouragement, that it is not merely he who has found the Lord that is called upon to rejoice, but that it is said by the Psalmist, "Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord." "Ask and ye shall receive: seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you."

Let us now conceive that the truth is gotten—that faith, which has been called, and aptly enough too, the hand of the mind, has appropriated and brought it within the grasp and possession of a believer, the question comes to be, How is this new acquisition to be disposed of? We may be sensible how often truths come to be known and believed by us, and how some of them perhaps have died away from our memory, and never been recalled: and yet we may be said to be in possession of them, for, upon their bare mention, we will instantly recognize them as doctrines we have already learned, and with the truth of which, at the time that we attended to their evidence, we were abundantly satisfied. Now, is it by such a possession of Christian truth that we will secure a part in the Christian salvation? It is not. It is not by first importing it into our conviction, and then consigning it to some by-corner of the mind, where it lies in a state of oblivion and dormancy—it is not thus, that our knowledge of God

and of Jesus Christ becomes life everlasting. The truths which be unto salvation are not laid past like the forgotten acquisitions of science or scholarship. And we are wrong if we think, that just as the title-deeds of an earthly house in possession may be locked up in security, and never looked to but when the right of property is questioned—so our creed, with all its articles, may be laid up in the depository of our mind, and there lie in deep and undisturbed repose, till our right of entry into the house that is not made with hands, and is eternal in the heavens, comes under examination, among the other topics of the great day of inquiry. We do not think it possible that the essential truths of the gospel can be actually believed, without being afterwards the topic of daily, and unceasing, and practical recurrence. But even though they could, they would, upon such an event, be of no influence towards the salvation of the believer. The Apostle tells us expressly, if they are not kept in memory they are believed in vain. By the gospel we are saved, not if we merely believe it, but if we keep it in memory. It is not enough that it have been once acquiesced in: it must ever, and through the whole futurity of our earthly existence, be habitually adverted to. It is not enough that it be sleeping in the mind's hidden repository: it must be in the mind's eye. It must be kept in remembrance; and that too, for the purpose of being called to remembrance. It is not enough that it be in the mind's latent custody: it must be in constant waiting, as it were, for being summoned into the mind's presence—and its effi-

cacy unto salvation, it would appear; consists not in the mind knowing it, but in the mind thinking of it.

This will be better illustrated by a particular truth. One of those truths to which the Apostle alludes, as being indispensable to be kept in memory, in order to be of any efficacy, is, that Christ died for our sins. It is not enough then, it would appear, simply to have believed that Christ died for our sins. This fact must ever and anon be recalled to our memory. It is by no means enough, that we, at one time, were sure of this truth. It is a truth that must be dwelt upon. It is not to be thrown aside as a forgotten thing, which at one time gave entertainment to our thoughts. It must live in our daily recollections. It is not enough that we have taken hold of this dependence. We must keep hold of it: nor does faith even in this save us, unless that which is believed be the topic of ever-recurring contemplation.

For this purpose, the habit of a great and continuous effort on the part of the human mind is indispensable. We know how all the truths of Christianity, and this one among the number, are apt to slip from the attention; and what a combat with the tendencies of nature it takes to retain our hold of them. It is setting us to a work of great difficulty and great strenuousness, simply to bid us keep in memory the truths of that gospel by which we are saved. They may have entered our mind with the force of all-powerful evidence—and they may have filled it with a sense of their supreme importance—and they may have ministered in the hour

of silence and devotion, an influence to relieve, and to comfort, and to elevate—and yet, after all, will we find it a mighty struggle with the infirmities of our constitution, to keep these truths in memory all the day long. We will find, that, among the urgencies of this world's business, the one and simple truth, that Christ died for our sins, will take its flight for hours together, and never once be presented to the mind, even in the form of a slight and momentary visitation. To be ever recurring to this truth—to give it an hourly place, along with the multitude of other thoughts that are within us—to turn it into a matter of habitual occupation for that mind, the property of which, throughout all the moments of its waking existence, is to be ever thinking—this is an enterprise in every way as arduous as to work against the current of nature. It is not laying upon us a task that is either easy or insignificant, when we are told to keep the essentials of the gospel in our frequent remembrance. It is the experience of all who have honestly tried it, that it is exceedingly difficult—and yet, so far from a matter of insignificance, it is the averment of the Apostle, that if we keep not the gospel in memory, we will not be saved.

We know it to be a work of difficulty, for a man overcome with drowsiness, to keep his eyes open. Suppose that, by so doing, he is only made to look on a set of objects which offend and disturb him, we may readily conceive how gladly, in these circumstances, he will make his escape from the hateful imagery which surrounds him, by repairing to the

sweet oblivion of nature. But, on the other hand, should his eyes, when open, have a scene of loveliness before them, by which the soul is regaled, and brightened into sensations that are every way agreeable, then, though an effort be necessary to keep himself awake, yet there is a better chance of the effort being actually made. There will be a reward and an enjoyment to go along with it; and the man, in these new circumstances, would both be in a state of pleasurable feeling, and, at the same time, in a constant struggle to maintain his wakefulness. However delightful the prospect that is before him, this will not supersede the necessity of a strenuous endeavour to keep himself in the posture of observation. And so of the mind's eye, in the mental scenery that is before it. Under all the stir, and activity, and delight of nature's movements, may the soul be profoundly immersed in the slumbers of nature's carnality. It may be spiritually asleep, even when busily engaged with the passing insignificant dreams of our present world. It is indeed a great transition on every son and daughter of our species, when he becomes awake to the realities of faith, and is made to perceive the existence and the weight of things invisible. But if all that he is made thus to perceive, be the dark and menacing imagery of terror—if he see nothing but God's holiness on the one hand, and his own sinfulness on the other—if, on looking to the sanctuary above, he see nothing but the fire of a devouring jealousy in readiness to go forth over the whole region of disloyalty to heaven's law; and, on looking to himself, he see that he is

within the limits of the territory of guilt, and liable to the doom that is in reserve for it, we may perceive the readiness with which many a half-awakened sinner will try to make his escape from the pain and the agitation of such frightful contemplations as these; and how gladly he will cradle his soul back again into its old insensibility, and find a refuge from the whole alarm of faithful sermons, and arousing providences, and constantly-recurring deaths in the circle of his much-loved acquaintanceship, in the forgetfulness of a nature, which, by its own drowsiness, may be so easily lulled into a state of unconcern about these things. The man will not, if he can help it, make an effort to keep himself awake, if all he get by it is a spectacle of pain: if he get a spectacle of pleasure by it, he may be prevailed upon. Still, even in this latter case, an effort would be necessary: even after the dread representation of the law is succeeded by the bright and cheering representation of the gospel, it will still be like the offering of a beauteous and inviting spectacle to the eyes of a man who is like to be overcome with drowsiness. There must be a sustained endeavour, on his part, to keep himself awake. He will ever and anon be relapsing into the slumbers of worldly and alienated nature, if he do not put forth a strenuousness on the object of keeping the truths of the gospel in his memory. So long as he is encompassed with a vile body of sin and infirmity, which will at length be pulverized by death, and transformed at the resurrection, there will be a struggle with the sleeping propensities that will still be about him, towards the

things that are unseen and spiritual. Great will be his pleasure, even here, in the objects of his believing contemplation: but great also must be the effort of painful and unceasing diligence to support the contemplation itself. He will just be like a drowsy spectator, with a fine and fascinating landscape before him, the charm of which he would like to prolong to the uttermost. And however engaging the prospect which the gospel sets before him, however cheering the promises, however effectually the truth that Christ died for our sins, chases away all the fears of the law, when it proclaims, that for every sin that the creature has dared to perpetrate, a holy and an avenging God must be satisfied; still we mistake it, if we think that no effort on the part of the mind is necessary to detain, within the reach of its vision, this bright and beautiful representation. Though called to rejoice in the Lord alway, yet there must be a putting forth of strength and of vigilance in the work of looking unto Jesus, and of considering him who is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.

II. The nature of that salvation which the gospel reveals, has been so fully exhibited by Mr. SERLE, in the First Part of this excellent Treatise, as to render any lengthened exposition of it in this place unnecessary. But it is worthy of remark, that, perhaps, there is not a passage in the Bible more fitted to instruct us in what the salvation of Christianity really is, than the expression of the Apostle, to which we have so frequently adverted, that unless we keep the truths of the gospel

in memory, we have believed in vain. The ordinary conception upon the subject is, that it is a rescue from hell, with a right of entry and admittance into heaven. And our faith is supposed to be our title-deed; a passport of conveyance, upon the examination of which we are carried in the train of our Saviour and our Judge to paradise; a thing, we fear, apprehended by many to be of no other use than merely to be retained in a sort of secure keeping, that, when found in our possession on the last day, it may then be sustained as our claim to the promised inheritance of glory. Now the Apostle tells us, that were it possible to believe the truth without being mindful of the truth, the belief is in vain: in other words, its main use to salvation does not lie in the possession of it then, but in the influence and operation of it now. When placed before the judgment-seat of Christ, it will be known whether we are of the faith; and there is no doubt that this faith will open the door of heaven's kingdom to all who possess it. But, let it well be understood, that this is not the alone, nor even the most important function of faith. It does not lie in useless reserve on this side of time, till the occasion comes round, when on the other side of time, it will vest us with a right of admittance into heaven. Its main operation is our good here, by the thing which has been believed being also the thing that is remembered. Were its only use to confer a title upon us, it might lie in store like an old charter, forgotten for years, but securing its purpose whenever there is a call for its production. But it has another use besides conferring a title: it confers a character. It

does something more than cause the place to be made ready for us: it causes us to be made ready for the place. We believe in vain unless we remember: but it is the habitual advertency of the mind to the great truths of the gospel—it is the unceasing recurrence of its thoughts to them—it is the practice of ever and anon calling them to consideration, and dwelling upon them from one day, and from one hour to another—it is this which appears to stamp upon faith its main efficacy towards salvation. And why? Because salvation lies in deliverance from sin, as well as from punishment—because salvation consists in being introduced to the character of heaven, as well as into heaven itself—because by salvation there is not merely the prospect of another habitation, but there is the working of another principle; and the way in which the memory must be added to faith, else we have believed in vain, is, that the memory, by calling the truths of the gospel into the mind's presence, reiterates upon the mind a moral and a sanctifying influence, which would be altogether unfelt if these truths were forgotten. It is because the memory perpetuates the flame which was first lighted by the faith of Christianity—it is because if faith work by love, then the memory is necessary to the alimentering of this holy affection; and if it be one use of faith to justify the sinner in the sight of God, a no less important use of faith is, that, through a habitual remembrance of the truths that are the objects of it, the sinner is brought under the constant operation of a moral influence, by which he is sanctified and made meet for the inheritance.

III. The truths to which the Apostle adverts, when he assures us, that unless we keep them in memory we have believed in vain, are, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that, after he was buried, he rose again. Let the first truth be habitually present to the mind, and the mind will feel itself habitually lightened of the whole terror and bondage of legality. That weight of overhanging despair, which, in fact, represses every attempt at obedience, by making it altogether hopeless, will be taken off from the wearied spirit, and it will break forth with the full play of its emancipated powers on the free and open space of reconciliation. There is nothing that so chains the inactivity of a human being as hopelessness. There is nothing that so paralyzes him, as the undefined, but haunting insecurity and terror, which he cannot shake away. We must be sensible of the new spring that is given to the energies of him who is overwhelmed with debt, when he obtains his discharge. So long as he felt that all was irrecoverable, he did nothing: but when he gets his enlargement, he runs with the alacrity of a new-acquired freedom in the path of industry. Now, in the spiritual life, it is this very enlargement which gives rise to this very activity. It is the glad tidings of a release, by Him who hath paid the ransom of our iniquities, that sets our feet in a sure place—that opens up to us a career of new obedience—that levels the barrier which keeps us without hope, and therefore without God in the world—that places us, as it were, in a free and unobstructed avenue, in which, by every step that we advance upon it, we

draw nearer to that Jerusalem above, the gates of which are now thrown open to receive us. The real effect of the doctrine of Jesus Christ and him crucified, upon the believer, is utterly the reverse of this world's imagination upon the subject. It does not beget the delusion in his mind of an impunity for sinning; but it chases away that heavy soporific from his moral faculties, which the sense of a broken law, when unaccompanied by the faith of an offered gospel, will ever minister to the heart; that let him struggle as he may, and keep as strenuously from sinning as he may, it will be of no use to him. The truth that Christ died for our sins, so far from a soporific, is a stimulus to our obedience; and it is when this truth enters with power into the heart, that the believer can take up the language of the Psalmist and say, "Thou hast enlarged my heart, and I will now run in the way of thy testimonies."

But if such be the influence of this truth when present to the mind, it must, in order to have a habitual influence, be habitually present. In order to work upon the habit and character of the soul, it must ever be offering itself to the notice, and ever reiterating the impulse it is fitted to give to all the feelings, and to all the faculties. We know not a single doctrine, which, by its perpetual recurrence to the thoughts, is more fitted to keep the mind in a right state for obedience. Now, in order that the great work of sanctification go forward, the mind should be constantly in this state. Let this truth be expunged, and, for all the purposes of spiritual conformity to the will of God, the whole

man will go into unhingement. But let this truth be lighted up in the soul—let it be kept shining at all times within its receptacles—let the trust never cease to lean upon it, and the memory never cease to recall it, and the hope never cease to dwell upon it—let it only show itself among the crowd of this world's turmoils and anxieties—and whatever the urgencies be, which harass and beset a man on the path of his daily history, let such be the habit of his mind, that, in obedience to this truth, the thought is present with him of his main chance being secured; the animating sense of this will bear him on in triumph through manifold agitations; and when like to sink and give way under the pressure of this world's weariness, and this world's distraction, this will come in aid of his faltering spirit, and carry him in sacredness and in safety to his final landing-place.

We have not room to expatiate on the influence of the other truth, that Christ rose again—that he eyes every disciple from that summit of observation to which he has been exalted—that the sin for which he died he holds in irreconcilable hatred—and that the purpose of his mediatorship was not merely to atone for its guilt, but utterly to root out its existence and its power from the hearts of all who believe in him. The Christian who is haunted at all hours of the day by this sentiment, will feel that to sin is to thwart the purpose upon which his Saviour's heart is set, and to crucify him afresh. This, however, to be kept in power, must be kept in memory. And as with the former truth, if we carry it about

with us at all times, we will walk before God without fear, so with it and the latter truth put together, if both are carried about with us, will we also walk before him in righteousness, and in holiness, all the days of our lives.

But it ought to be remembered, that if we are not mindful of these truths, we positively do not believe them. If we have not the memory, it is a clear evidence that we have not the faith. It is impossible but the mind must be always recurring to matters in which it has a great personal interest, if it only have a sense of their reality. We should try ourselves by this test, and be assured, that if we are not going on unto perfection, through the constant and practical influence of the great doctrines of Christianity upon our heart, we need yet to learn "what be the first principles of the oracles of God."

It is from these considerations that we estimate so highly the following valuable Treatise of Mr. SERLE, 'THE CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCER,' in which the great and essential truths of Christianity are exhibited in a luminous and practical manner. But it is not merely those more essential truths of the gospel which form the foundation of a sinner's hope, that he brings to our remembrance; the operative nature of these truths, as inwardly experienced by the believer, in the formation of the spiritual life—the sanctifying influence of Christian truth over the affections and character of the believer—the whole preceptive code of social and relative duties to which, as members of society, Christianity requires our obedience—in fine, the whole Christian system

of doctrines and duties is presented in a plain and practical manner, well fitted to assist the understanding in attaining a correct and intimate acquaintance with the truths of Christianity; while the brief, but distinct and impressive form in which they are presented, is no less fitted to assist the memory in its recollection of them. The Treatise, as the Author remarks, is rather intended for hints to carry on the mind to farther meditations, than for full and exact meditations themselves; and it is brought into narrow compass, that the serious Christian may find it a little *remembrancer*, with many short errands to his heart. And as the reader, from our previous observations, will not fail to remark, that it is not the mere knowledge or possession of any truth, but the constant remembrance of it, which can give it an operative influence over the mind, and make it issue in those practical results which such a truth is fitted to produce—so, however important those precious truths are which are so clearly and impressively presented in the following Treatise, yet they can have no saving or salutary influence, without being kept in constant remembrance.

If it have not been our habit hitherto to call to mind the essential truths of the gospel, we ought to begin now, and by reason of use we will be sure to make progress in it. Whether it be the work of an artizan, or the work of a merchant, there is room for this thought in short and frequent intervals—that Christ died for our sins; and we are confident that, if we are believers, the thought will leave a pacifying and a holy influence behind it. God has proclaimed

XXV

a connection between the presence of gospel truth to the understanding, and the power of gospel affections over the heart. He has told us that faith worketh by love; and we, by constantly recurring to the great objects of faith, are putting that very instrument into operation by which God sanctifies all those who have received his testimony in behalf of Jesus Christ his Son.

If we receive the truths of Christianity, we are not merely put in possession of them as title-deeds to a blessed inheritance above, to be presented after death for our entrance into heaven; they are also instruments to be made use of before death, for graving upon us, as it were, the character of heaven. And when the day of judgment comes, it is not by a direct inspection of the title-deeds that our right to heaven will be ascertained; it is by the inspection of that which has been engraven by the truths of Christianity, operating as so many instruments upon our character. Christ will look to the inscription that has been made upon our hearts and lives: so, while nothing can be more true, than that it is by faith we are justified, it is in fullest harmony with this truth, that it is by works we are judged.

T. C.

GLASGOW, *November*, 1823.

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TO
THE CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCE OF
JOHN THORNTON, ESQUIRE,

Who,
Adorning the doctrine of GOD his SAVIOUR,
In an almost unexampled degree,
By deeds of piety and benevolence,
Various, liberal, and extensive,
But without ostentation :

And who,
Imparting the means of spiritual instruction,
As well as temporal relief,
To multitudes of the ignorant and the poor,
In every quarter of the world,
By a fortune, though affluent,
Yet unequal to the vast desire of spreading good
Which possessed his mind ;
Owned, amidst all,
That himself was a sinner,
Indigent and helpless ;
And, resting no hope on what appeared,
To every eye but his own,
A long and astonishing course of excellent usefulness,
Cheerfully acknowledged, to his latest hour,
That, by the Grace of God, he was
Whatever he was,
Of faith, or holiness, or stability ;
Thus ascribing his whole title to salvation,
With all the things that accompany it,
In practice, prospect, and experience,
To the favour and mercy of

JEHOVAH,
FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT,
In and through
THE GREAT REDEEMER ;

This Treatise,
For a real though mean memorial
Of mutual and disinterested friendship,
Never to perish,
Is very affectionately inscribed by
THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

THIS little Treatise is divided into Three Parts: the first of which relates chiefly to the Word and Work of God in the Redemption of Souls by Jesus Christ; the second, to the inward and practical Experience of this Redemption in the heart of the Believer; and the third, to his outward Conversation and Conduct with others. The addresses to God, at the end of each part, may be read alone, or all together, in their order, as one prayer.

On this wide and great subject, the reflections, which might have been greatly multiplied, are brought into as narrow a compass as possible, being intended rather for hints to carry on the mind to further meditations, than for full or exact meditations themselves. The Treatise, therefore, is printed for the pocket, that the serious Christian may find it a little *Remembrancer*, with many short errands to his heart, which will neither encumber him to carry nor fatigue him to read.

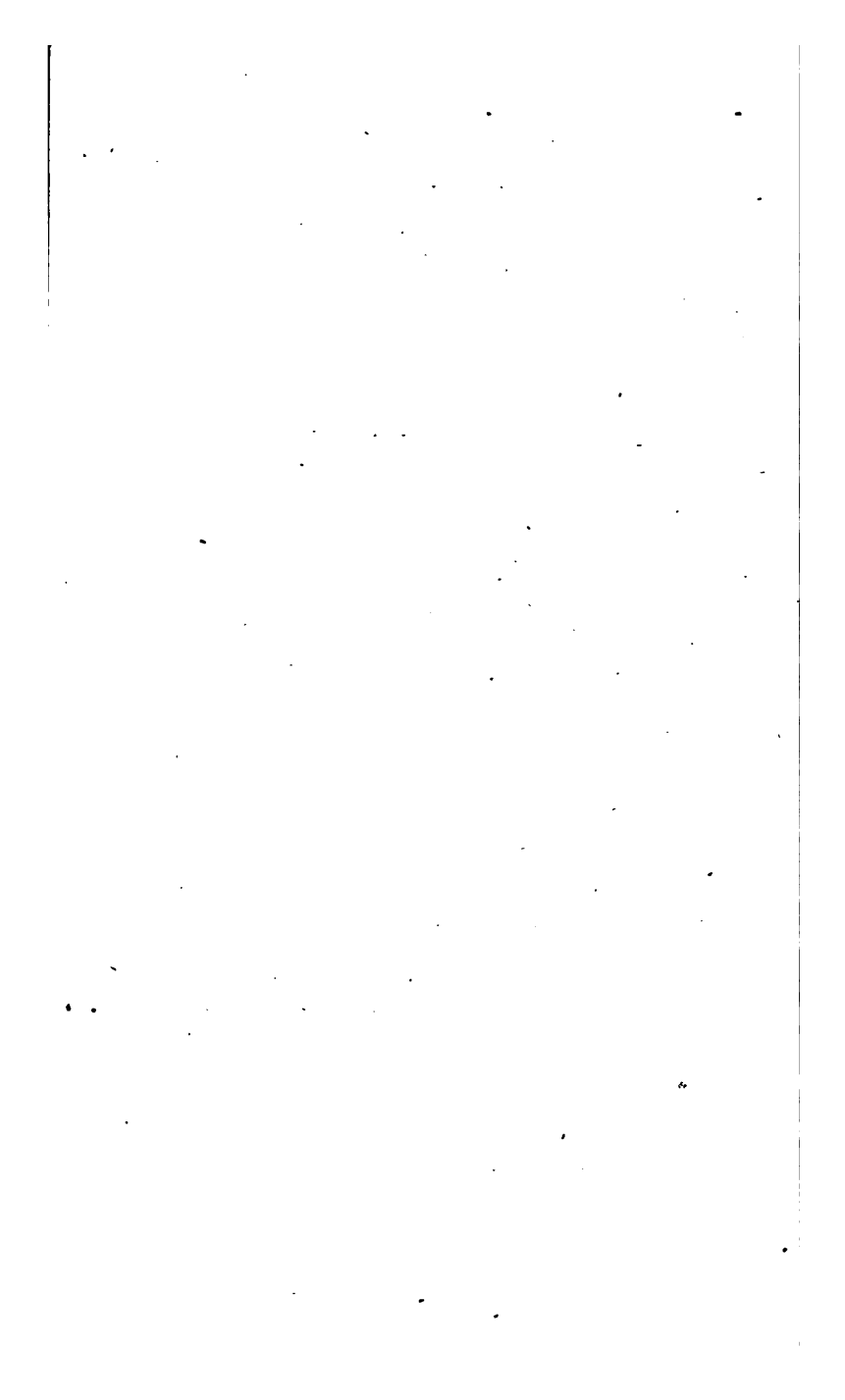
As the Author humbly believes, that he has had no other view in these reflections, which have employed some of his solitary hours, than the glory of a gracious God, and the edification of believers, he only requests, as one of the greatest favours he

needs, that the pious reader will remember him, in return, before the throne of grace; that the things of which he hath endeavoured to put others in remembrance, may never be forgotten by himself, but be known, experienced, and enjoyed, by him more and more. The acquisition of many prayers on this account, from his Christian brethren, is of such value and importance in his mind, as would make him a far higher compensation indeed than he has a right to expect, for these humble labours, which need the mercy and favour of God, and the kindness and candour of every good man.

November, 1786.

PART I.

**THE WORD AND WORK OF GOD IN MAN'S
REDEMPTION BY JESUS CHRIST.**



THE
CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCER.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

On the Entrance into Spiritual Life.

“WHEREWITH shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?” How shall I, a sinner, approach the eyes of that Majesty, which cannot look upon sin without abhorrence? My iniquities are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart sinketh within me on their remembrance. My affections are naturally all inclined to the world and worldly things. My judgment is depraved; my will is perverse; my understanding is darkened; my knowledge vain; and I see nothing within me or about me, but what by guilt is altogether defiled. I have sure proof of that Scripture, “that every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart is only evil continually;” and that “from the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no soundness” in my nature; but only “the wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores” of sin.

How then can I please God? How shall such a worm, such a lump of perverse ungodliness, obtain his favour? Shall I seek to deserve it by my own good thoughts?—Alas! I am not sufficient of myself to think even one. Shall I by excellency of words approach my offended Maker?—He regardeth not words, but the spirit and the heart: and my spirit and heart are wholly defiled. Shall I then by good works attempt to render him propitious?—O my God, where shall I find them! How can I begin to act, before I have begun to think what is right? How can the exercises of the body be pure and free, when the soul is unholy, and enslaved by sin? And if, from this day, I could cease from evil, and do perfectly what is just and right, which the experience of all men tells me to be impossible; yet what will become of the long black catalogue of iniquities, both in heart and life, which are already written against me? How shall I wipe off the sins of my nature and my life, respecting the times that are past?

O Lord, thou hast revealed thyself as a holy God and a just. Thou hast declared that thou wilt not spare the guilty. And I have offended thy righteous law, in every hour and every action of my life. How then can I be saved? How is it possible for me to escape the wrath to come? My anxieties, like my sins, might justly overwhelm me, and I ought to tremble at the righteous judgment which I know I deserve. There are but a few days at the most for me to live upon earth; and I am not sure of one. O how shall I flee from the wrath to come! how shall I avoid eternal burnings, in which no man can dwell

but with misery, and of which no man can think strictly but with horror ! Lord, can such a sinner as I escape ? Canst thou have mercy upon me ?

Such are the breathings of the heart, when it first begins to awake, and live, and feel that there is an evil and a curse in sin, and that sin, with all its evil, lieth at the door.

CHAPTER II.

The Method of Mercy.

SUCH a flowing from the heart, as that just mentioned, gladdens all heaven. It is the motion of the divine Spirit upon the troubled deep, and will ere long produce both life and peace.

Soul, dost thou feel the power of thy own corruption ?—Are these thy meek, yet bitter cries ? O hear, and may thy God enable thee to believe, the glad tidings of his own salvation !

Thou art a sinner, it is true ; and thy mercy it is to see, in due measure, how great a sinner thou art. It is the first line in the large book of humiliation, which thou must be reading all thy life long. But Christ died for sinners such as thou art ; for all sinners that come unto God by him ; for the vilest of sinners that see and feel the vileness of sin, and bemoan it, as thou dost. He saved Mary Magdalene the harlot, Matthew the publican, Paul the persecutor, Peter the swearer, liar, and denier of his Mas-

ter, the malefactor on the cross, who had been a thief and a murderer, and ten thousand more like these; and he hath just the same power, and means, and mercy to save thy soul, even thine.

He saves graciously, that is, freely: because no wisdom nor worth of man have contrived, or could have obtained, this greatness of salvation. It was planned in grace, and performed by grace. It is all of grace, and bounty, and love, from beginning to end.

For this purpose he came into the world and took our nature upon him. He took it in its meanest and humblest form; and was content to be born in a stable, to be brought up by a labouring man, to labour with him too, to suffer the worst evils of human life, and the sorest pains of human death, that so he might be an oblation or sacrifice in the stead of his people, and render an atonement to the justice of God for them. These sufferings and this atonement are the debt due to the law and holiness of God, without which, consistently with his attributes, he could not spare the sinner, but by which he can be both just, and yet the Justifier of him who taketh refuge in Jesus. Yea, this dear Saviour having paid the penalty due to his transgressions, God is now faithful and just to forgive him his sins, or rather, more faithful and just to forgive them, than he could be in laying on the punishment again, which Christ endured in their behalf.

Christ also lived upon earth to fulfil all righteousness; and he fulfilled it completely for his redeemed. He makes himself over to them; and all he hath is theirs, through faith in him. Thus they have a

right to call him, what he is, "The Lord our Righteousness." God is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, and beholds every poor sinner who trusts in Christ, and lives in him, as unblamable and un-reprovable in his own most piercing sight, yea, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. This righteousness is that garment of salvation, which covers them wholly, and fits them perfectly for the kingdom of heaven.

Contrite soul, believest thou this? Is this good news, the very gospel or good news of God? Search and see. Read and pray over thy Bible, and thou wilt find, that it is the very voice and will of thy Lord. O that the fallow, the hard and barren ground of thy heart may be so broken up by his power, as to welcome this joyful news, like the thirsty soil receiving showers from the skies!

CHAPTER III.

The Soul's Difficulty in Embracing Mercy.

"THESE are glad tidings indeed (the soul may say) to one weary and heavy laden with sin as I am, could they be apprehended rightly, and maintained constantly, in the strivings of sin, and the doubtings of nature. I am, therefore, earnest to know these two things:—1st, How shall I embrace this mercy of Christ proposed in the gospel? And, 2d, How shall I keep up the spirit and intentions of it in my

heart and life, so as to endure to the end and be saved?

“ I know not how it is with others, but I find myself very unable, nay most unable; when I have the greatest occasion, to lay hold upon this mighty mercy of God, and to rest upon it, and to make it my own, and to use it for my consolation and support. I long for this with the full purpose of my heart; and my groans and tears in secret are well known unto God. But I have also an evil heart of unbelief, which suggests a thousand doubts and fears, sometimes of God's willingness to save me particularly, who am so very vile and faithless; and sometimes of my own reality of desire towards him, which is often dreadfully mixed with the care for other things, and overwhelmed with anxieties and sorrows, difficulties and temptations. O what great troubles and adversities hath God shown me! How shall I be delivered from the body of this death! How shall I lay hold on eternal life! How shall I know that I have fast hld, or be assured that none shall be able to pluck me from it! O Lord, to be assured of this thy favour, is, both in life and death, of more worth to me than a thousand times ten thousand worlds.—For I might have these, and be wretched; but, with thee, I can have nothing but life and peace for evermore.”

CHAPTER IV.

The Nature and Exercise of Faith.

FAITH is the gift and the operation of God. It comes by the Holy Spirit's power, moving and strengthening the sublimest faculties of the soul, and is really a regeneration, a re-begetting, a revival of life from the dead. Thus the believer is said to be "born of the Spirit;" because it is the Spirit's office in the covenant of grace to regenerate; and because it is the promise concerning the Spirit to "all, even as many as God shall call." And thus also, the Christian is said to be "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

When this principle of divine life and light is given to the soul, it enables the soul to feel its own loss and misery, and to see its own sin and darkness. A man can have no true sight of the nature of sin but by this grace. He is, therefore, in some sense, a believer before he knows himself to be one. Faith acts in him, before he can be sensible of the reflex act of faith. He first lives; and then he feels his misery; and then he cries for mercy. He cries for mercy, and then is enlightened to see the way of mercy in the word of mercy. He is next enlightened to behold the free welcome and rich bounty of this mercy to all returning sinners. He is enabled to contemplate upon himself, and to view the fitness of God's

mercy for him, and his fitness, as a needy convinced sinner, for it. He is then strengthened to embrace it, like a poor creature who must perish without it, but who shall never perish with it. And, at length, God's grace seals itself upon the soul, by giving a true taste of joy and peace in believing; insomuch that the broken, drooping heart revives, and is able to say, "I do humbly venture to believe that Christ died for me, and will save me for evermore."

Now, through all the course of this gracious work, which, according to the will of God, is slower in some than in others, there is often much doubting and disputing in the man's own conscience. It is a sore struggle, at times, to quell the clamours of unbelief, and the suggestions of Satan; and at last, perhaps, the soul embraces the reality of God's love in Christ, with a trembling kind of hopeless hope, and doubting believing. These things often puzzle the understanding, and perplex the whole will and affections. A true believer is like Rebecca labouring with twins, a faithless Esau, and a trusting Jacob; and so, like her, he cries out, "If it be so, why am I thus?" Whereas, if it were not so, if he were not of God, it could not be thus. Nature alone would not struggle; nor can what is dead strive against the stream. The whole bent of nature is against grace. So again, if he were all grace and no sin, he would feel no trouble; for the opposition of grace is made to nature and to the sin which is in it. And it is a good sign, though not a pleasant feeling, that there is this conflict: it demonstrates the life of God to be within.

In this way, the Christian embraces the gospel. He is enabled in hope against hope to believe it, as the grand charter of his salvation. And this very act of believing is the evidence within, concurring with the evidence of the written word without, that his name is enrolled in the charter, and that he is consequently entitled to all its blessings.

Take heart, therefore, thou child of God, and fear not. Thou hast the promise, the power, the mercy, and the truth of Jehovah on thy side; and who can prevail against him? If thou dost not wholly believe, or art not perfectly cleared from all doubts, be not however dismayed. The faithfulness of thy Lord is not grounded upon the perfect exercise of thy faith, but upon his own sovereign grace and love. Thou desirest to trust him with thy whole heart; but thou never couldst have desired this, if he had never wrought that disposition within thee. He was the Author, and he will be the Finisher, of all in thee, as well as all for thee. If God did not spare his own Son for thy sake, what will he spare beside? Who shall, or who can, lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God himself, with whom there is neither evil nor folly, that justifieth thee from both. Who can condemn thee? It is Christ who blotteth out thy sins by his precious blood, or rather is risen again to present thee faultless in his righteousness before the throne, and to plead for thee as that Advocate who never lost a cause. Who shall separate thee from the love of Christ? Shall the evils of life, all the distresses of time, all the rage of the devil? Nay,

in all these things thine almighty Saviour will render thee a conqueror, and more than a conqueror, because he hath loved thee. O divine words that follow! From thine inmost affections, from the very ardour and spirit of faith, mayest thou breathe them forth! "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord."

CHAPTER V.

On Communion with the Divine Persons in Jehovah.

CURIOUS speculations upon the Trinity profit not. There is a sort of knowledge in this, as in other things, which betrays its own falsehood by puffing up the soul. Much time hath been lost, and many hurtful disputes have been raised, concerning the mode of the Son's generation from the Father, and the manner of the Spirit's procession from both; points which have not been revealed, and which, therefore, are not necessary to faith. It is sufficient for us to apprehend, that there are three equal persons in one Jehovah, or self-existent Godhead, and that this Godhead is one: that we are privileged to have communion with these Divine Persons in their several offices of salvation; and that, by the

unction of the Spirit, we come into the grace of the Son, and possess the love of the Father, now and for evermore. "Through Christ," says the Apostle, "we both," that is, Jews and Gentiles, "have an access by one Spirit unto the Father." And thus, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost," are with all true believers in every age of the world. He, therefore, that doth not thus apprehend the doctrine of the Trinity, only apprehendeth the phantom of his own imagination, and is never the better for his speculation, be it ever so abstruse or refined.

Of what avail to my soul are all the nicest disquisitions of men? I want food and light, reality and enjoyment. These do thy word, O Lord, afford in plentiful measure, when thy grace opens the well-spring to my heart. I am there taught to pray for that anointing of the Holy One, which shall lead and guide me into all thy saving truth. By him I am both instructed, and enabled to renounce myself; to put on Christ, and to cleave to my Redeemer as my only portion and hope. By the Spirit and Son of God, I am led up to fellowship with the Father, and to call upon him as my Father, even mine. O my blessed God, my Abba, my Father, my Life, and my All, what hast thou revealed to my poor soul; and how much more hast thou done and prepared than thou hast hitherto revealed to men, or than men in this state are able to conceive! O thou Fountain of unutterable blessedness, thou unfathomable Height and Depth of love, help me thus to know thee in the secret of my soul; and may all

thy works of providence and grace increase this inward knowledge to the end ! While others dispute, let me enjoy. Manifest thy precepts to my mind, and say to my longing spirit, " Peace be unto thee, for I am thy salvation."

One spark of this life is of more worth than the whole universe of notions; for this not only brings an understanding of divine things superior to all speculations, but gives with it a fulness of satisfaction, arising from the very taste and perception of the things themselves. Faith takes them for realities, hope is enkindled by them as such, and love finds them to be so, and embraces them with joy to the end.

CHAPTER VI.

On the Incarnation of Christ, by which he became Emmanuel.

WHO shall unfold this mystery, or unfathom this love of my God ? The Ancient of days became a child of days, and the Lord of all would be the servant of all, that he might be a Redeemer, a Brother, a Friend, of poor unworthy mortals, of vile apostates and rebels, such as I am, and such as, without him, I and all others for ever must have been.

He took our nature without sin, that he might bear our sin. If sin had been in that which he took for himself, it would not have been possible, that one, who was equally sinful, should have taken

off sinfulness from others. Thus he, who was not, and could not, be a sinner by nature, did, by imputation, become the greatest of sinners: "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree; and Jehovah laid upon him the iniquities of us all, when he once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." This dear Emmanuel was a Lamb without spot, and therefore meet to be slain for atonement; and a Scape-Goat, or Strong-One, going off, laden with iniquities; and so able to bear them away into everlasting forgetfulness.

He was, very God and very man in one Christ. As Christ he is Emmanuel, or God with us. What his name implies, that he truly is. He is God with us, able to save and to succour, able to bless and to enliven, in all our pilgrimage from earth to heaven. "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

And is this thy promise, O thou meek and lowly Jesus! and shall I be still slow of heart to believe it! Shall I always be hanging my head like a bulrush; and shall my eyes be still gushing out their faithless tears; when thou hast promised not only the best of creatures in earth and heaven, but thine own blessed Self to be with me, who art Lord of all! O my dear Redeemer, be so with me, by thy gracious power, that I may be deeply sensible of thy continual presence! manifest thyself to me as thou dost not unto the world; for I am thine, and I desire to give up myself and all I am and have to thy blessed will for ever. Be indeed, according to thy name, my Emmanuel, my God with me and

in me of a truth, that I may walk with thee as one agreed, and draw from thee all those supplies of grace, life, and peace, without which I can neither be happy nor alive to thy glory. O hear and answer, for mine eyes and my heart are upon thee.

CHAPTER VII.

On Christ's Descent into Egypt.

IT behooved this Emmanuel in all things to be made like unto his brethren; therefore he went down into Egypt. All he did upon earth had some use and meaning. By some facts, he testified what he was doing; and by others, what he would continually do for his people.

“Out of Egypt have I called my Son, saith the Lord.” His redeemed were spiritually in Egypt, the house of bondage. They were there under the service of a cruel king, a prince who ruleth in the world by usurpation till the time appointed. Grievous are the tasks, and sad are the wages, of this tyrant of souls. Jesus went down and came up again for a sign. As the Head of his people he did this, preaching their redemption from bondage in himself. In their order and times, they come up out of Egypt too, by the strong hand of this Captain of salvation. He is great in might, and therefore not one of them faileth. The prince of the air loseth his dominion over them; and though he fol-

low them like Pharaoh, and chase them all the way, he cannot hinder their course of faith, nor rob them of their Canaan in glory.

O marvellous love of my Saviour! Was it not enough for thee to take up my nature in its best estate, without submitting to a manger, to contempt, to persecution, to banishment, and all the wrongs of men? O how low must I be fallen, that it should be needful for thee (for, if it had not been needful, this act had been spared) to endure poverty, wretchedness, and shame, that I might be delivered from all! I was in Egypt, and thou camest to me. Thy grace preached liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. Thy power performed what thy love proclaimed; and thou broughtest the prisoners from the prison, and those that sat in darkness out of the prison-house. I, O wonderful to tell! I, among thy ransomed, have followed thee in the regeneration out of this dismal Egypt, and have tasted a little of the glorious liberty of thy children. Not unto me, my dear Saviour, not unto me, but unto thy name be all the praise. I was wallowing in the mire of Egypt, and in the mud of the Nile; I was entirely given up to the filth and pollutions of this world, and should have remained therein till I had been sunk for ever in its woe; unless thy mighty arm had wrought my deliverance, and set me free. Glory to thee, Jehovah-Jesus, thou Saviour all-divine, for mercy unmeasurable like this, for grace and glory yet before me, to which there is no end! O how shall I show forth thy praise for all which thou hast done for my soul!

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Miracles of Christ.

WE see but little into the true worth and importance of the miracles of Jesus, if we look no farther than the historical facts. These indeed do speak aloud the glory of the Divine Person to the carnal sense of man, and did so even to those who hated and blasphemed him; but the grandeur of these works consisted in this, that they were only outward testimonies of the far more noble operations of his grace within the soul, which were not to endure for a time only, like their outward signs, but to flourish throughout eternity.

He gave sight to the blind, that he might testify unto men his sovereign power in giving light and understanding to the mind. He opened the deaf ear, that men might know by whom alone they can hear aright the good news of salvation, and live for ever. The lame he caused, in a moment, to walk, that his people might learn that they can only move, as well as live, by him, and that without him they can do nothing. He cured the foul leprosy of the body, in order to show that only by him can be healed the far more deplorable leprosy of sin, which covers and defiles the mind. All sickness vanished at his command, that we might have hope in him, as the sure Restorer of our souls. The poor or meek among men, were made rich for

eternity. He cast out unclean spirits, and suffered them to possess the swine, who were thereby lost, that he might teach his redeemed, that he only delivered and can deliver them from the powers of darkness, which, being let loose upon the world, drive them violently and swiftly down the steep course of time, into a gulf of inextricable woe. The hungry multitudes were fed by his miraculous power, to explain this great truth, that he is not only the Giver of spiritual life, but the constant Sustainer and Nourisher of it from day to day : and he did this by small means, that the excellency of the power might be known to be his, and not in the creatures, however sanctified, blessed, and used. The winds and waves were instantly obedient to his word, that his beloved might rejoice in him, as the Stillor of all spiritual waves, the tumultuous madness of this world, the ragings of Satan, and the confusion of all things. These can roar and foam no longer than it pleaseth him ; and when they foam and roar at all, it shall turn out in the end for the good of his people. The dead were raised, to proclaim his rising power, and to declare, that the issues also of spiritual life and of endless death are altogether in his hands. Whatever he did was an act of mercy, under which he revealed, as in a parable, innumerable lessons of grace and love. All his works proclaimed him to be both the Creator of all, and, what seems more comforting to his chosen, the Redeemer and Restorer of millions that were lost.

Learn from these things, O believer, what thy

Lord and God hath done for thy soul. He quickened thee from the death of trespasses and sins; he giveth light and peace to thy mind; he feedeth thee with the bread of life; he cureth all thy spiritual diseases; he quelleth thy manifold enemies and temptations; he strengtheneth thee with strength in thy soul; he doeth all that is done in thee by grace; and he will never cease working in thee both to will and to do—no, not even when he hath brought thee to his kingdom in heaven.

O pray fervently, my soul, rightly to apprehend these precious things. If thou teach me, blessed Lord, then shall I know them, in some measure at least, according to my capacity, as they ought to be known. Such knowledge, indeed, is too excellent for my clouded faculties of nature; these cannot, if left to themselves, attain unto it. I, therefore, seek not to obtain the apprehension of these truths, as fallen man can teach or retain them, but as thou did teach and enforce them. In thy teaching, though the substance of the truths be the same, there is a wide difference from all the teaching of men. Man, by his own study, gropeth in the dark, and wearieth himself in vain to reach up to the perception of thine excellent wisdom; but thou art light in thyself, and sendest down both illumination and influence at once to such as are taught by thee, by which they not only know thy truth as a truth demonstrable in itself, but feel the blessings of it as a truth applied and made their own. They find strength and nourishment in what thou gavest for food, and not airy words or unprofitable speculations,

which, without thy saving influence, are all that can be found in the best and wisest instructions of men. O raise me up, then, my blessed Teacher, above the pictures of things, which may be gained by words, to the true enjoyment of the things themselves. So shall I not hear, or give discourse only of thy spiritual feast, like a man in a dream, but shall taste and see indeed how good and gracious thou art, and that all life, power, and consolation, are entirely from thee.

CHAPTER IX.

On the Word of Christ.

“FOR ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven; and upon earth it runneth very swiftly. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: Give me understanding, and I shall live.”

Such is the word, and the end of the word, of my gracious Redeemer. It is called a word, because it is a revelation; all words being only the revelation or expression of things. This revealed word is settled in heaven upon the throne of God, is ordered by the Divine Persons in all things, and is sure, because ordered by them in a covenant which cannot be broken.

It is a word too of testimony, because it testifieth of my Saviour throughout, either directly by the institutions and declarations of his grace, or indirectly

by the courses and actions of his providence, meeting in one and the same purpose, which is the guidance and salvation of his people.

This word, in the conduct of the Divine Spirit, is also a word of power, and the fit instrument of all his work. It is his spiritual sword, by which he divides asunder the soul and spirit, and effects that circumcision of the heart, whereby his people are enabled to live no longer unto themselves but unto God. The operation is painful indeed to the flesh or to nature; but it causeth the spirit to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to give up its confidence in all things beside.

For this purpose, then, of testifying for Christ, and of acting by the Spirit in the redeemed, is all the written word calculated and given. Hence, the institutions of the law preached Jesus and his salvation—the prophecies declared the same truth—the histories are records of God's conduct towards his people from age to age—the Gospels are evidences of the accomplishment of all these things in Christ—and the Epistles are explanations and enforcements of these things to believers. In short, all the holy writings relate to Christ, and to the redeemed in him. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega of the whole word and work of the Most High.

In this word and its experience, consist the right wisdom and comfort of a Christian. Here is truth without error; so that he can read without fear, and trust without danger. All other books, as they come from men, have more or less of folly or vanity in them, and often are looked over with little real

satisfaction and improvement. But, in this volume, grace not only discovers something new, but brings new force out of old truths, which have charmed the soul a thousand times. It discovers the multi-form and manifold wisdom of God, in what he hath spoken; insomuch that, from under the veil of one precious instruction, another and another shall arise, as the soul is improved to bear them. These are the steps of the kingdom; and the higher the renewed mind can ascend, it not only understands better what it hath already attained, but sees farther and wider into the glories yet before it, till it is ravished with unspeakable delight in its views of the infinite knowledge and love of God.

The right understanding of this word doth not puff up, but humbleth. He hath not a true apprehension of its sense, who is lifted up by it in himself. The lowly reader is the only learner. To him it is not a word lettered or sounded, so much as a living and lively word ingrafted. It enters into his heart more than his ears, and diffuseth its sweet savour through all the faculties, setting them into delightful exercise for the divine glory.

The great depth of the word of God keeps the real Christian ever a learner. He knows that it is impossible to reach the utmost of God's wisdom: There will be always mysteries to be unfolded, because man's comprehension is finite; at the bound of which, how wide soever it may extend, remaineth ignorance. One, who had been in the third heaven, and in spirit caught up into paradise itself, where he heard unspeakable words, could only say, when he

wrote of the divine counsels, “.O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” He could stand upon the shore and taste; but all beyond was an infinite ocean.

The true disciple, however, knows enough to make him see the vanity and unprofitableness of all learning and wisdom, (if so they may be called,) out of Christ. The speculations of men are but dreams, and their pursuits but idle labours at the best, which begin and end in self, and which have no higher object than this evil world. The poor simple countryman who hath learned Christ, (and many such, blessed be God, there are,) can pity the pompous ignorance of those who know almost every thing but God, and the proper value of their own souls. By a logic, far beyond that of the schools, he hath been led to this conclusion, that God is his Father, that Christ is his Saviour, that the Holy Spirit is his Guide, that the Bible is his charter and his library, that the devil, the world, and the flesh, are his foes, that the earth is the wilderness of his banishment, that heaven is his home, and that all the favour, love, and power of the Godhead are engaged to bring him thither. The worldly wise can only value this (if at all) when carnal knowledge is dying with their bodies, and all their trifling thoughts are about to perish. Hence it is, that the poor man’s knowledge being sound and true, though ever so small, can stand the onset of trials in the world, and death at last; while the self-taught, the learned, and the knowing, with none of this true understanding,

fall into the absurdest errors, fail in their course, and frequently go off at last doubting and despairing.

O, my soul, seek thou the substantial wisdom which cometh from God, and which neither time nor eternity itself can diminish, but only brighten and improve. Though other knowledge may be valuable for the purposes of this world, yet this alone can ripen for heaven, and is therefore most earnestly to be sought for by thee, whose business and calling, whose citizenship and hope, are principally there.

And, O Thou, who art the living and life-giving Word itself, through whom and for whom all the written word was given, come and possess my soul! I long for nothing, and I would always long for nothing, but for thy wisdom and thee. O forgive my unsettled heart, which hath so often been taken up with a multitude of unprofitable things, instead of being wholly fixed upon thee, who art the only Way, the Truth, and the Life! I can have no rest, no firm establishment, but here alone. My nature is unstable as water; and I live, moreover, in a slippery world. Leave, O leave me, therefore, not to myself, nor to the power of the evils, which are above, beneath, and on every side. Set me upon thyself, my blessed Rock, and order thou my goings in the way, and lead me into the way everlasting. Who is sufficient for these things but thou, who art all-sufficient? How can I, so poor a creature, hope either to stand or to prevail, but through that strength which is made perfect in weakness, through that wisdom which cannot be deceived by fraud, and that love which is stronger than death, and durable as

upon their account magnified the law of their God. It was for this end that he lived so many years upon earth, and went through all the stages of human life to manhood; by which his people of all ages might have, through faith, a right of acceptance in him.

And, thirdly, the merit of the sacrifice for sin, and the substitution of righteousness for sinners, required some person to intervene, or to stand between God and sinners, and to offer these exchanges in their behalf. This office is the office of a priest, who is a mediator between God and man, and who must therefore be holy in himself. Christ was this perfect person; and so was "such an High Priest as became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," having an unchangeable priesthood, to which he is consecrated for evermore.

These are the reasons of all his labours in love and righteousness: and he was able to merit and go through them, being Jehovah in man; as well as to suffer what he took upon him, being man in Jehovah.

O what a task of unparalleled grace and humility is here! Who could have done such unimpeachable works, but he who is perfect in himself? Who could have done them to render others perfect for ever before God, but one so much above all created perfection, as to have for others an unbounded perfection to spare?

Lord, help me to meditate upon thee, and upon all that thou hast done for my soul! O put on

this garment of salvation, this robe of righteousness, which thy blessed hands have perfectly wrought, that it may be my wedding garment in the day of my espousals, when I shall leave the world, and appear before the Majesty on high ! This is the righteousness of saints, pure, white, and shining, in which they walk with thee in glory, and in which I also hope to walk, unworthy creature as I am, both with thee and with them. O then shall I appear without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, all-acceptable to God, all-illustrious in thee ! Lord ! what hast thou wrought indeed ? Thou hast wrought for me to entitle me to heaven ; and thou hast wrought in me to fit me for heaven ; a work, as it seems to me, no less difficult than the other ; so stubborn and vile am I, and so opposite to thy pure nature is mine. I marvel, and with tears of joy I marvel, at all the mysterious wonders of thy redemption, at thy plain and clear, yet unsearchable love, at thine awful justice magnified even by grace itself, at the kindness thou hast shown, and the goodness thou hast promised, at the never-ending line of wisdom in thy holy word, and at the unbounded scene of glory yet before me. I am overwhelmed, I am astonished, at the weight and grandeur of thy divine benevolence. Accept the faculties of my body and soul, all I am and all I have ; and let them be found to thy praise, and honour, and glory, both now and at the day of thine appearing ! Amen.

CHAPTER XI.

On the Death of Christ.

“BEHOLD, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.”

No, my Jesus, never was sorrow like thine. Thou barest the griefs of millions; griefs which would have sunk those millions into insufferable woe. Omnipotence itself groaned under the tremendous load, which forced from thy pure and perfect body, not common sweat, (the curse inflicted with human labour,) but a dreadful sweat, bursting forth in great drops of agonizing blood. O what a doleful cry didst thou utter, and who but thyself can conceive those (to us unknown) pangs and sufferings, which forced from thy sacred lips, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!”

The meditation of thy sufferings and death is painful in the sympathy of nature; yet I cannot wish that thou hadst not endured them, nor didst thou fully wish it for thyself. Thou wast contented to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men for this very purpose. It was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, that all the parts of this solemn event were transacted. And it is for the everlasting interest of me and of thousands, that all the Scriptures concerning thee were thus awfully fulfilled.

Lord, what is sin, that thou thyself couldst not be spared; when, from the souls of thy people, it was taken off and laid upon thee? Can any thing more solemnly describe the hatred of the divine nature to sin, and the severity of the divine justice upon account of it, than the pangs, the horrors, the cries of thee, my Jesus, thou suffering Son of God? And if thou wert sacrificed for sin, who in thyself knewest no sin, what shall become of those who reject thy saving sacrifice, and yet all the while have nothing but sin in themselves?

Who could support such excruciating tortures, unassisted and uncomforted as thou wert, even upon a just account? It was not in the power of a creature to sustain thine inward griefs, thine outward torments, and the entire dereliction or forsaking of God, of men, and of nature, all together and at once, as thou didst sustain them, upon any account or motive in the world. But thou enduredst the whole with dignified complacency and satisfaction, even for thine enemies, to convert them into friends, and to make rebels and apostates heirs of God, and joint-heirs with thyself of an eternal weight of glory. May I not turn thine own words and say, "Behold, and see, was there ever love like thy love, which thou showedst for thy people, when the Lord afflicted thee in the day of his fierce anger?"

Lord, how shall I speak, and what shall I say to these things? Shall my incredulous heart be still backward to believe? If Jesus died for my sins, can I die for them too? If he freely bare the curse for my sake, will the justice of my God still

require the curse at my hands? If my iniquities were taken on himself by my Saviour, and he made a full and perfect atonement for them, can I dare to affront the divine Majesty by supposing, that he is yet so unrighteous as to charge them all again upon me? O forgive my hard and impenitent heart, that I should ever imagine such blasphemy against thy faithfulness and love; that I should even think that thou canst be so unjust and untrue, even in contradiction to thine own word, as to lay that still upon myself, which for my sake was entirely laid upon my dearest and most blessed Redeemer! Lord, I melt into tears of shame at myself, and into tears of comfort, upon the remembrance of all this thy kindness to my soul. Thy blood, O my Jesus, cleanseth from all sin; and if from all, what sin can possibly remain to be now imputed to me? O help, thou Mighty God, thou Prince of Peace, that I may no more be faithless, but believing!

CHAPTER XII.

On the Resurrection of Christ.

NEVER fact was more strongly and undeniably established than this. Divine Providence ordained that it should be so; because upon this great truth depend all the assurance and efficacy of our redemption. "If Christ be not raised," says the Apostle, "your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

But is there no proof of Christ's resurrection, but the historical evidence? Yes, blessed Lord, as thou givest thy people to know of the doctrine of salvation, that it is thine, by the demonstration of the Spirit; so thou affordest to them a most convincing testimony, that thou art indeed risen from the dead, by their super-resurrection from the death of trespasses and sins. If thou hadst not been raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, it would have been impossible for any of them to have either received or walked in the newness of life. Their being spiritually quickened with thee, is a proof in itself of thy glorious resurrection, and a confirmation to their souls, that they are thine own unalienable inheritance, and that therefore they shall live with thee for ever.

Thou hast truly and graciously said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." Lord, I was long, and too long, dead to God and dead to thee, shut up under the ban of the law through sin, yet, like a dead carcass to all outward impressions, utterly insensible to my alienation and separation from thy life and peace. I was dead also to my own true interest and everlasting concerns, and alive only to sin, and to the service of the lord of sin, without perceiving his bitter tyranny, and horrible designs: "So foolish was I and ignorant, yea, even as a beast before thee." The beasts indeed follow the end of their being, but I did not think upon mine. In tender mercy didst thou open mine eyes,

that I might know myself and my misery, and that I might behold thee as the only refuge and hope of my soul. Thou gavest me the powers of a new and spiritual life: and then I ran towards thee with an affection I had never felt before, and desired to know more and more of thee and the power of thy resurrection, so that I might no longer live in or for myself, but in thy faith and for thy glory. All this was thy work, and thine alone. I might as easily have created a world, as thou have new-created myself, in opposition to the millions of hinderances from within and without. No: it was thou, my dearest Redeemer; it was thou that restored my soul, and led me in the paths of righteousness for thy name's sake; and therefore I trust, (and though I am sometimes afraid, yet still do I trust, and would trust again,) that "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and that I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

O what an evidence of thy resurrection hast thou thus brought home to my heart! Confirmed as it is, by thy holy written word, it is demonstration itself, and is not to be argued away by all the corrupt reasonings of men. It is a demonstration both of word and of deed, of spirit and of life, of understanding and experience, of thy faithfulness and truth, and of all my blessed and joyful interest therein. "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it: shout ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

Thomas doubted, that I might believe more strongly. He was suffered to fail in his faith, that my faith, and that of all thy children after him, might be improved and confirmed. But the mere evidence of sense can draw no blessing. His bodily view of thy resurrection was indeed followed by faith; but, from hence thou tookest occasion, most happily for thy people, to say, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."—Through thy mercy I have believed, and according to thy word have tasted thy blessing. Joy and peace in believing, quietness and assurance of mind, peace and resignation of soul, some holiness and strong desires after more, contempt of this world and foretastes of a better, preparation for death and views of a transporting eternity, are among the many proofs that thou art risen and livest, that thou art gracious and true. O that these proofs may increase in number and measure, that my faith may be more and more lively, and that I may "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

CHAPTER XIII.

On the Ascension of Christ.

"THOU hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts," in thy human nature, "for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them,

or that they might become an habitation of God through the Spirit."

This was prophesied of Jesus long before his advent in the flesh. It was so prophesied, as though it were a fact already past; because the things to come are, as it were, present with God, being fore-known by his omniscient mind, and ordained in his holy will, which must be accomplished in all its purpose and decree.

He ascended to the throne of the Highest, with the full merits of his blood and righteousness, which were a sweet-smelling savour, or a savour of rest, to the everlasting Three. By this gracious ascension, Jehovah is become propitious to the redeemed, receives them in Christ, loves them for Christ's sake, favours them with his peace in their hearts, carries them on by his providence and grace, makes all things work together for their good, bears them through life and death, and finally receives them to glory.

The ascension of Christ brought down gifts from above, and, as the greatest of all, the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, for his people. It was thus expedient for them, that he went away from the earth; for if he had not carried up his merits before the throne, the Comforter could not have come down to have led them into all the truth of God and of Christ, and to have made that truth effectual in their salvation. By his holy influence they are brought to believe, and are kept in believing to the end.

Jesus ascended likewise to prepare a place for his chosen. In a short time they are to be dismissed

from wretched houses of clay, standing in the waste wilderness of the world; and then they are to have in heaven everlasting mansions of beauty and glory, fitted and furnished by Christ himself. They are soon to leave their bodies, now thoroughly defiled by sin, and to put on some spiritual fabric appointed for them, in which they are to remain with Christ and the blessed, till the final consummation of all things.

O what excellent gifts, my blessed Redeemer, hast thou procured and purchased for my unworthy soul! What hast thou not brought down of grace for time, and of promise for eternity, to me, and to helpless sinners like me! Yea, thou hast given thine own self to thy brethren, that in thee they might be given up to God, and like thee be a sweet-smelling savour, ascending by thy merits to the highest heaven. O what shall I, what can I, render for mercies like these! I can give, poor as the gift is, only my heart and soul to thy dear glory: and I would not, surely I would not, restrain these. Yet I cannot offer these, so weak and so corrupt am I, without the assistance of thy strength. Favour me, then, more and more, with thy gracious power, that my affections may be constantly mounting upwards, longing for the place of my everlasting residence, and counting all things worse than dung, that would stop my progress thither. Where thou art, dear Lord, soon do I hope to be. I am tired of this earth, and of all its shifting miserable scenes; I am weary of this body, full of disorder and sin; I loathe the husks which the swine of this world

quarrel for and devour; and I can be satisfied with nothing less than thee and thy presence for ever. O my Beloved, when shall I ascend up after thee! All below is Mesech and Kedar: but, "with thee there is the fulness," not the mere shadow, "of joy; and, at thy right hand, there are pleasures," not for a moment only, but "for evermore." Thou hast said, Surely, I come quickly.—Amen, (reply the hearts of thy people, and my heart would reply among them,) yea, come, Lord Jesus!



CHAPTER XIV.

On the Glorification of Christ.

THE mission and work of Jesus for our salvation was completed in the eternal glorification of his person in heaven. His body was spiritually, though not substantially, changed in this great event; and thus, with his human soul, as one complete and perfect manhood, was taken into God. He now shines in the brightness of the divine glory, far above all principality and power, and every name that is named, whether in heaven or in earth; and he thus shines as the head of our redeemed nature, that his people may also be glorified with him, and be so united to him and to each other, as to become an holy temple and a glorious habitation of God through the Spirit.

"I pray," said the gracious Redeemer, "that

they may all be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

O what a transcendent height of glory is this, to which such creatures as myself, believing in Jesus, shall shortly be raised! What mind could have been sublime enough so much as to have thought of these wonders, if the Lord of glory himself had not been pleased to reveal them?

The glory of Christ is not like the airy phantom which men call glory, but hath everlasting weight and solidity; it not only sends forth light, but is light: and all that can be conceived of splendour, excellency, durability, and bliss, meets in this glory, as its sole and substantial essence. The believer, therefore, is said to enjoy in Christ an exceeding eternal weight of glory—exceeding all conception and comparison; eternal in its enjoyment and duration.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when Christ shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is:" so that "with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.—Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" O that my heart may feel the thanks which no tongue can utter, and, in humble adoration, bless my God for his unspeakable gift.

CHAPTER XV.

On the Intercession of Christ.

WHEN the high-priest, once a-year, entered into the most holy place, he carried the fume of the sweet incense, and the blood of the killed sin, or sin-offering, with him. The fume was to cover the mercy-seat upon the ark of the testimony, and the blood was to be sprinkled before it. This shadowed forth the interceding office of the great High-Priest of our profession in the holiest of all. He is entered there with his own blood, by which he hath made a perfect atonement for his people, and with his own righteousness, which both covers himself, as the propitiation, and his whole church under him, so as to render every one, and altogether, acceptable to the pure attributes of Jehovah.

Hence my Redeemer receives his name of Angel, Interpreter, Advocate, or Intercessor. He pleadeth for me, and for all poor sinners who come unto God by him, before the throne of the Highest. He fumeth out the merit of his blood, and the excellent perfection of his righteousness filling all heaven, as it were, with the fragrance of that which is unutterably delightful to God himself. No broken-hearted rebel, who cometh unto God by this High-Priest Jesus, shall ever bewail the insufficiency of his advocate, but rather shall bless the Lord for his mercy, in laying his help upon One so almighty.

If he look to this Saviour, then certainly he will be with him as his Angel, Interpreter, or Advocate, "one among a thousand, to show unto him his uprightness; and he is gracious unto him, and saith, Redeem him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Then "his soul is brought back from the pit, and enlightened with the light of the living."

Our High-Priest, bearing our nature, "can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, though without their sin: and he is able to save us to the uttermost, or for evermore, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us." O that I may come, therefore, boldly, with liberty of speech and with confidence of heart, to the throne of grace, that I may obtain the mercy I want, and find grace to help in the time of my need.

Blessed Lord, thou hast showed me what thou hast done for me on earth, and what thou art now doing for the interests of my soul in thy kingdom. Thou settest before me, in both respects, the motives of the most sure and the most strong consolation; so that in thee I might have the fullest assurance of understanding, of faith, and of hope. O work, if it be thy will, this rich consolation within me; for, without the effectual aid of thy power, I may reason upon these motives, but I cannot apprehend them; I may conclude in my mind that they are true, but I shall not be able to apply their sweetness, or strength, or truth, to my heart. Lord, take thy poor servant's cause into thine own hand; plead it for him in the court of heaven; urge it upon him in the court of his own conscience on earth; let

him feel the comfort of both in all the sorrows of his present state; so that no trial, nor outrage from his enemies, no humbling sense of his own infirmities, may be able to stagger his confidence in thee.

Though thou art in heaven, my Jesus, yet thou knowest where I am and whereof I am made; and thou rememberest that I am but dust. O leave me not, neither forsake me; lest my own heart, without any thing else, and especially my own heart with ten thousand evil ones beside, draw me off from my only true hope to some wretched, stupid, corrupting refuge of lies! Intercede for me, as for Peter, that my faith fail not. He needed an advocate not more than I. O thou that didst plead his cause with everlasting success, plead and take care of mine; that I, together with him, and all the clients of thy grace, may rejoice in thy goodness to my soul, and may bless thy holy name for ever and ever!

CHAPTER XVI.

The Love of the Father.

“IN this is manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” We could have had no life but through the Redeemer; and we could not have had him, but through the tender love of the Father. Nothing more forcibly can show the love of God towards us than this,

that he should give up Christ to the deepest humiliation and sufferings for our rescue and redemption. Had there been any possible method of salvation beside this, consistent with the divine attributes, surely the bitter cup would have passed away from the blessed Jesus, and God would not have permitted him to drink it. But God did not, and therefore could not, in this case, spare his Son, but delivered him up to death for our sakes; and thus, in a most admirable manner and degree, "commendeth his love towards us, while we were yet sinners," who therefore as such could have done nothing to deserve it. "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

All this ensued according to the covenant of grace, which was settled between the Divine Persons upon the throne of heaven; and when the Lord Jesus was sacrificed, then was this covenant ratified and established. Jehovah interposing himself therein, and through the divided flesh and spirit of the Messiah, satisfying his law and justice for the remission of sins.

By this new testament in the blood of the Saviour, his people are not only admitted into fellowship with himself as their brother, yea, as flesh of their flesh, and bone of their bone, in a more than espoused nearness; but they are also entitled, by a gracious right, to approach unto God as their Father. They are adopted into his family; and the covenant, established in the hands of the Mediator, is the testimony and the seal of it. Hence they

are no more strangers and foreigners, and much less slaves and enemies, but sons and heirs, children and heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus; and so when they look up and pray, they do not take God's name in vain, and speak falsely, when they call Jehovah himself, "Abba, Father;" but they utter what they have a right and privilege to utter, and what the Lord delights to hear.

O my soul, thou canst not be in a ten thousandth part so ready to be joyful in this matter, as thy God is to rejoice over thee. If he could regard thee so much, when thou wert dead in condemnation, and an alien, as to give up his Son for thy sake; how much more, when thou art reconciled by such expensive means, will he pour forth his compassion upon thee? If he was kind to thee when he stood as thy Judge, and smote thy Substitute for thy sins; will he, can he, cease to be kind, under the character of thy Father, thy merciful and gracious Father, in Christ Jesus? Lord, remove so wicked a thought, so diabolical a notion of unbelief from my mind! It is treason against thy love, thy justice, thy truth, and all those attributes which are the shining rays of thy nature, to harbour so foul an opinion: it is atheism, madness, yea, the very falsehood and blasphemy of hell. Holy Father, drive by thy Spirit such base and abominable suggestions from my heart; and let me claim the privilege of my adoption, let me call myself thy child, though an unworthy child, and thus honour thy faithfulness and truth, by living in the sense of my nearness and dearness to thee!

When my soul can most ascend to this its proper

station, then time, and the things of time, are most under my feet; the world, and all its bustles, annoy me less; my heart beats freely for heaven; and I can look down from the hill, seeing the vanities and pitying the follies beneath, which carry men away from God, and too often "drown them in ruin and perdition."

CHAPTER XVII.

The Love of the Spirit.

IF God be love, then the Spirit is love, because the Spirit is God. He manifests himself as the God of love, by unfolding and bestowing such love as only God himself could have, and from himself could pour forth unto others.

The Holy Spirit, as one of the parties in the everlasting covenant, loveth his people with an everlasting love. By him they are spiritually circumcised, and so admitted into the bond or privileges of the covenant; that is, they are cut off from the state of nature and the world, and are brought into a new fellowship with God, and all that belongs to him. By him also they are made sensible of the love of the Father and of the Son, when he sheddeth forth his own love upon their hearts; for it is He who enables each of them to cry, "Abba, Father," under the taste of his mercy; and to say to Christ, "Thou art my Saviour, my Lord, and my God," in the rich

experience of his grace. Without the love of the Spirit, as they could not know, so they could not come up to the love of the whole Trinity: for by him alone it is shed abundantly upon all that are his, both in earth and heaven.

If I were left to love God by my own fallen powers, and had not the continual help of the Spirit of love, I should fear that I could do nothing but hate him entirely. "The carnal mind is enmity itself against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The law of God is the pure life and love of God; and only by his Spirit can I delight therein, and then only after the inner man. Hence it must follow, that, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Without him, every man must remain as he was born, earthly, sensual, devilish.

O how deeply then am I indebted to this divine Agent, for taking up his holy residence in my unworthy soul! What loving kindness and mercy have I not felt and enjoyed by his blessed power within me!

How is it, that He, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, should vouchsafe to take up his abode in a poor sinner's breast? What marvellous love is this, that he should stoop to dwell with one, whose heart hath been the residence of the evil spirit, and the cage of every unclean bird? Surely it must be infinite love which could cleanse so unholy a tenement, and keep it in any degree clean for himself, against the manifold attempts to pollute it on every side.

Whatever I may lose then, O thou blessed Spirit; may I never lose the love of thee! The loss of fame, of riches, and of all things here, are but of small account in themselves, and can soon be made up by thy power; but the loss of thee is the loss of more than life itself, the parting with the very anchor of my soul, and turning me adrift into a dark ocean of doubt and despair. O then forsake not thine own, who could never have been thine own but from thy mere love and bounty, and perfect all the work of grace in me, that, before men and angels, I may give indubitable proof that indeed I am thine!

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Work of the Spirit.

THE nature of man, since the FALL, is carnal and prone to evil; nor hath it power or inclination to raise up itself to the desire and enjoyment of heavenly things, but, on the contrary, shuns and abhors them. It "savoureth not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men" and of the world.

Now, as whatsoever is born of the flesh is flesh, and as flesh and blood cannot inherit nor even know the kingdom or grace of God; it is not marvellous that Christ should say, "Ye must be born again," or that it is absolutely necessary for a man to be "renewed in the spirit of his mind," before he can

apprehend or enjoy the things of God. We see this plain necessity proved by the case of all men; for no man seeks and knows God by his own natural abilities; and every one, who doth know him, freely confesses, that it is by grace alone he obtained that knowledge.

The first work of the Spirit, then, in a sinner, is a "new birth unto righteousness." As this is the Spirit's office in the covenant of grace, so believers under it are said to be "born of the Spirit." This is their entrance into the knowledge of themselves and of God. They are united unto God in Christ by the act of his Spirit, and so partake a new life, with new functions, faculties, and affections, peculiar to it; which life is in all things opposite to the carnal life of their fallen nature, and creates, from the time of its birth, a constant warfare in them against the being and power of evil.

As this generation, in its essence, is the sole work of the Spirit, so it is likewise in all its effects. When the Christian begins to live spiritually, he is soon enabled to think and act spiritually. And as the views and objects of this life are beyond the creature, and rest in God and in Christ, the Holy Spirit leads up the heart to a dependence on the Divine Persons for the attainment of them. This is faith: and thus it appears, that it is both the gift and the operation of the Spirit.

By this faith the Christian desires, and attains what he desires. By this he prays, and hopes, and waits, and expects. By this he wrestles against sin, and Satan, and the world. By this he looks with a

holy contempt on all dying things, and beholds those delightful realities which are invisible to sense. By this he knows himself to be a child of God, and the purchase of Christ. By this he sees a glorious immortality provided for him, and longs often to enjoy it. By this he suffers the will of God, as well as obeys it, knowing that it must work entirely for his good. By this he welcomes death itself, and at length obtains the victory over it, through Jesus Christ his Lord. All this work of faith is carried on by the effectual unceasing agency of the Holy Spirit. It is an action upon the spirit of a man, which none but the God of spirits either would or could perform. And where this work is not thus inwardly performed, there may indeed be the notions of truth, and the forms of godliness, but they have no real life or power in them. The heart, in that case, may be as dead to God, and as much in and of the world as ever.

He is called the Spirit of Christ, because he not only is one with him in Jehovah, but also takes of the things of Christ and shows them to his people. Thus, where his Spirit dwells, Christ is said to dwell, because of their inseparable union. If Christ dwell in our hearts by faith, it is therefore because the Spirit of Christ is in us, and God is in us of a truth. It was the Spirit of Christ in the Apostle which enabled him to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

. To thee, then, O thou Holy Spirit of truth, and

fulfilled all that was given him to do; the Spirit enlivens, enlightens, and seals to the day of redemption. This is the order of the covenant; beginning with the Father, and, through the Son and Spirit, descending from heaven to the salvation of his people; but, in the order of their enjoyment of this covenant, the Spirit begins with them, and they ascend by him, next to the Son, and then to the Father. This is a blessed mystery of faith, which (however plain in the Scriptures) can only be understood truly in the course of a gracious experience. No mere notions, and especially of the carnal mind, can possibly reach it. The tuition, or rather intuition, is altogether divine.

What a blessed thing is it to believe and to know assuredly, that the wisdom, will, affection, and power, of all the Persons in Jehovah, are concerned in the salvation of every poor sinner that repenteth? What a confidence of spirit ought not this to inspire in the children of God! If their Lord be thus engaged and concerned for their welfare, how can any of them be lost, or fail of what he hath prepared for them? O my soul, rejoice in the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit, that one God, who hath done such great things for thee, and who will yet do more, yea, more than eye hath seen, ear heard, or entered into the heart of man to conceive. To this ONE God be glory. Amen. Hallelujah.

CHAPTER XX.

On the particular Design and Use of the several Holy Scriptures.

BLESSED Lord, "thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path!" Without this glorious revelation, I must have remained, as I was born, a poor, helpless, hopeless, and miserable sinner.

By this is thy servant taught the order and excellency of thy first creation, when man was made in righteousness and true holiness, and lived therefore in tranquillity and peace. Hence I learn how he fell from thee, and in falling, became spiritually dead, and cut off from thy life in his soul; while his body received the seeds of dissolution, and began to die from that very hour. I also am instructed to see thy mercy proclaiming a Redeemer in the midst of thy justice, which otherwise must have destroyed, or made wretched without remedy, my whole race. Thou ordainedst a covenant by sacrifice with the first believers, showing thereby in type and shadow the great atonement of Jesus Christ, who, by thine own everlasting covenant, was "the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world." By faith in this propitiation, they offered up their spiritual sacrifices, when they presented before thee the appointed creatures; and "according to this faith they died, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, they were persuaded of them, and embraced

them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

By this holy word I also learn, how, for the dreadful impieties of the old world, thou broughtest on a flood upon the earth, destroying all mankind but the small remnant of one family. My eyes have seen abundant testimonies of this truth, within the bowels as well as upon the face of the globe; in beholding what once lived upon the surface, at great depths beneath; and what once inhabited the seas, upon the tops of the highest mountains.

By thy blessed record I understand, that thou madest a covenant with Noah, and Abraham, and the other patriarchs, promising the great Saviour to them and their seed. Thou didst suffer their offspring to go down into Egypt, and broughtest them up again with thy mighty hand, that by this thou mightest proclaim a more glorious deliverance to thy people. The plagues of Egypt were strong emblems of the curses and evils which sin brings upon the souls of all men by nature; and thy visitations of Israel were likewise representations of thy conduct in grace towards all thy redeemed. To this day, thou deliverest thy people from the world and the devil by the blood of the paschal Lamb, and sendest them forth from the house of bondage, to become sojourners as in a wilderness, "and to seek a better country and a heavenly."

Thou didst appoint all the rites and ceremonies of the holy law, to show forth the Saviour's love, life, and death, till he should come. They are lively prophecies, and wise memorials, of what he

was to be, and to do, and to suffer, for the salvation of poor sinners. No mind but thine could have contrived such a long train of mysterious truths, which were all to be fulfilled; no power but thine could have established and accomplished them all from age to age; no love but thine could have undertaken salvation at so costly an expense, as the sufferings and death of thy blessed Son. In this sacred volume, I further read the conduct of thy providence, in preserving the chosen remnant, and in punishing the ungodly and profane. The histories of men are composed by prejudice, and are full of falsehoods. What passeth in my own time is so differently represented by different men; nay, what I have seen myself hath been so variously seen and understood by others; that, were we alike minded to report the truth, our misapprehensions and errors are so many, that through them the same facts would scarcely appear to be the same things. But thy record is faithful and true, and spareth not the faults and evils of any man, neither of thy chosen people as a nation, nor of thy dearest children as individuals. Here I see thy constant love of holiness and hatred of sin. Here I read many great lessons of human infirmity, and many strong proofs of thy forbearance, thy justice, or thy mercy. O let me, while I read, remember and understand!

In this book of books, I am also instructed by large and various prophecies given forth in deep and mysterious words. By thy holy prophets thou hast indeed spoken "at sundry times, and in divers manners" or figures; but all their prophecies, whether

by symbol, type, vision, inspiration, or voice, declare but one final purpose, even the salvation of souls by Jesus Christ. His testimony was the very life and spirit of all their predictions.

By other parts of this blessed volume, I am edified and built up in my most holy faith. The final patience and self-renunciation wrought in Job, under thy visitation, instruct me in the way of thy righteousness. The proverbs or similitudes, full of mystic sense under moral ideas, teach me to look unto thee for all thy wisdom, grace, and strength. By one book, I am convinced of the vanity and vexation of all worldly things: and, by another, of the mysterious height and depth of the love of Christ. I am also taught what to sing, and how to sing, of thy wonderful praises, by words which thine own Spirit hath revealed, which millions of thy children have graciously communed with, and which infinitely exceed all the compositions of men. They are words, replete with prophecy and vigorous sense, and full of sober joy in the faithful foresight of the prophecy fulfilled. The love of Christ is the substance, the form, yea, the very life and breath of all thy holy psalms.

In thy gracious Gospels, dear Lord, I am taught the accomplishment of every mystery and of the great work of salvation, covenanted and foretold, in the person, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. O what a picture do they hold forth of the meekness, wisdom, grace, and compassion of that dear Redeemer! Lord, thou knowest how often "my

heart hath burned within me," when thou hast talked with me by these records, "and while thou hast opened to me the Scriptures." And yet thou knowest too, how often I have been one of the "fools and slow of heart to believe all that thy prophets have spoken." O give me an understanding that is true; and so shall I be taught thy word.

The life, deeds, and writings of thy holy apostles, are, in thy blessed hands, most glorious and lively demonstrations of thine everlasting truth. They show me how thy saints have walked; and they encourage me to be a "follower of them, who now, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." O my gracious Master, strengthen me, as thou wert pleased to strengthen them, with might by the Spirit in the inner man; and so shall I hold on and hold out, till I receive, as they have received, the blessed end of my faith in the salvation of my soul! Thou hast also been pleased to close the prophecy, and to seal the vision, with an awful revelation, which reacheth onward to the very ends of time, and almost unveils the majesty of eternity itself. I read this mystic book with solemn awe, and often tremble as I read. Thy grace hath unfolded some little of its important mystery to my mind; O grant me more understanding, so far as may be proper for my welfare, or as my weakness in grace may be able to bear it. Keep me from reading with my own eyes, which are but carnal and cannot profit me, and let me be thy disciple, and thy humble disciple alone! The ideas of this awful book are all framed upon the figures and principles of the ancient part of thy

volume, and can only be apprehended according to the intimate analogy which runs through the whole of the record of salvation.

O Lord, I bless thee, I daily bless thee, for this wonderful revelation of life and peace, which, if all men could spiritually read, all men would confess, that it is, and could be, of no organization but thine. The impressions of divinity are so glorious and evident, that he that runs, if he hath but eyes, may read and own them. And yet in nothing is this record more true, and in nothing is human experience of it more strong and striking, than in this, that "no man can believe" or understand a word of it to the salvation of his soul, "unless it be given him from above," unless all his instruction be imparted by thee. Not that in thy book there is any defect indeed, but wholly in the gross, sensual, and sinful apprehension of fallen man.

"Open thou mine eyes, O Lord, and then shall I behold wondrous things from thy law!" Things hidden to carnal sense, but clear and obvious to the view of that faith which thou givest to thy children. I wait upon thee for this end. While I read and while I write, while I praise and while I pray, I seek for thine instruction. I am a fool without thee; but, by thee, I am made wise for eternity. Speak then in thy holy word, for thy servant heareth; and enable me to lay up what I hear, like Mary, within my heart, that I may be a true "scribe indeed, instructed in the kingdom of heaven, bringing forth, out of the treasure of my heart, things new and old!"

CHAPTER XXI.

The recollection of the First Part in Prayer to God.

O THOU ever-blessed Jehovah, three Persons in one Godhead, full of grace and full of glory, have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner! I am not worthy so much as to look up to the throne of thy holiness, being polluted in my nature, wicked in my life, and covered entirely with innumerable transgressions. But O, whither, whither shall I go for help and succour, but unto thee, O Lord, who, for these my manifold abominations, art most justly displeased!

Wonderful goodness! Thou hast commanded me to come, and invited me to present myself before thee, with most astonishing testimonies of favour and acceptance. Thou hast found a way to make satisfaction to thine offended majesty and justice, not by my punishment and ruin so fully deserved, but by the sufferings and death of thy dear Son. By him thou hast magnified the law and made it honourable, through an infinite and perfect righteousness, which he hath completed for it. For these wonderful ends, by thine everlasting covenant, he took into his divinity our human flesh, and became our Emmanuel, or God with us. And so he became capable of suffering, doing, and substituting for his people, whom thus he purchased, all that was given him from thee. Having completed this whole work of

salvation, he is now ascended up on high, pleading and interceding for poor sinners, that they might be partakers of his glory. O how great was his love: stronger indeed than death; mightier than sin and Satan; yea, almighty to redeem!

Holy Father, how great also was thy love in sparing thine own Son from heaven for guilty worms, and yet in not sparing him upon earth, when bearing their nature and transgressions! I am overwhelmed with a sense of thine unutterable benignity and compassion; joined as it is with everlasting justice, purity, and truth.

And, thou blessed Spirit, what do I owe unto thee for all thy gracious work in my poor heart, enslaved as it was by sin, and by nature departed as it is from all righteousness! Thou hast taken of the things of Jesus, and explained, and enforced, and enlivened them into my soul. By thee alone, I have heard, and believed, all the mysteries of redemption, needful for me to know. By these I have experienced some of them; and by thine aid I hope to experience more. Be with me throughout my pilgrimage, and, in these days of rebuke and blasphemy against thy person, O grant me the evidence of thy presence, by enabling me to abound in every good word and work for thy glory.

O thou blessed Trinity! Thou Three-one Jehovah! God in covenant for redeemed sinners! God in truth over all the world! hear and regard my prayer. Accept and sanctify my praise. I adore thee for all thine abundant mercy. I glorify thee, O Father, Son, and Spirit, equal in nature, love,

and majesty, with earnest, though poor returns of gratitude and praise. Receive me, and whatever I am and have, graciously for Jesus' sake, who is my Master, my Saviour, my Priest, my Prophet, my King, my Lord, and my All, and also thine only Son, in whom thou art well-pleased for ever.

Lord, I am frail and full of wants. I am a poor, weak, despised, and despicable man; and yet thine own adopted child notwithstanding. Give, O give me the Bread of Life, and lighten my dim eyes with the light of life; supply all my need, great and various as it truly is, according to thy riches in glory, by Christ Jesus! I bring a thousand and a thousand wants, imperfections, and cares, before thee; and, Lord, I can bring no other. These and such as these, are all I have both in body and in soul. O then take me as I am, and make me what thou wouldst have me to be. I know not of myself what is right, or good, or wise; but thou knowest: therefore, I beseech thee, my blessed God, undertake even for me. I have no refuge, but in thy power; I have no hope, but in thy promises; and I desire nothing in this world, no, nor in the world to come, but the sweetness, the testimony, the possession, the glory, of thy great salvation.

O let the evidence of this salvation be made more and more clear to my mind, and the experience of it more and more firm and solid to my soul, through thy word and by thy Spirit. May I read, and understand; may I understand, and grow; till I come to the stature and measure appointed for me. Keep me from leaning on myself, lest I fall into error.

Help me to depend upon thee, that I may be led into all the truth. So shall I praise thee with joyful lips, and through my gracious Saviour, bless and adore thee, O God, my God, for ever and ever !

PART II.

**THE INWARD AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE
OF REDEMPTION IN THE HEART OF
THE BELIEVER.**



THE
CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCER.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

On Unbelief.

THE corruption of our nature renders the life and exercise of faith the most difficult affair in the world. It is indeed far beyond ourselves. The Apostle, therefore, ascribes our believing to the exceeding greatness of God's power, even to the effectual working of his mighty power.

Many talk of this believing, and yet but few have attained it. The assenting to a chain of principles is easy; but the grounding of the heart in these principles upon Christ, and especially in times of trial; the giving up a man's self, as nothing; the patient waiting of the soul upon the truth and promise of God; the cool and deliberate parting with the things of sense for the things of the Spirit; the discovery and suppression of carnal and corrupt motives in the heart; all these are matters, which are neither in the compass, nor taste, nor inclination of flesh and blood.

Hence it is, that, when men are made serious by affliction, sickness, or the approach of death, they find themselves so much at a loss for the use of that faith, which perhaps, from a long profession, they did not suspect they had wanted. O it is dreadful to be in the dark, when we want the most light, and to have no assurance of everlasting things, when we are called to part for ever with the things of time.

The soul, indeed, that never doubted, hath never yet believed. The office of faith being to subdue unbelief in all its activities, this often makes a sore and difficult conflict in the soul: carnal reason looks for the demonstrations of sense, and cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God; for these being in their nature out of its comprehension, they appear foolishness unto it; and therefore this weak and fleshly reason cannot bring a strong and living confidence to the soul. Faith is chiefly occupied in things above animal sense, and often against it; but reason beginning with ignorance, and proceeding upon doubt, seeks its rest in sensation, and can rise no higher. A man, therefore, cannot be *reasoned* by logical deductions and convictions out of unbelief into faith, but must be *saved*, through the gift and working of the divine power, first to possess faith, and afterwards to use it.

The mind likewise can never subdue its distressing doubts by its own exercise; but only by the gracious help of God: and the very looking for this help is from faith. Faith brings indeed its proper evidences with it; but these are all from the divine record, which, by the demonstration of the Spirit,

answers the ignorant objections of carnal reason, and (what is vastly beyond the power of all the reason in the world) at once silences, satisfies, comforts, and renews the mind.^a Thus faith relies, and the Spirit testifies; and this conjunction of what the soul is enabled to yield with what in that act it immediately receives, constitutes that full abundance of certitude, which should be the grand aim of the children of God. "After ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest* of our inheritance."

This is not the work of a day. Conflicts and exercises are repeated continually; because while flesh remains in the believer, it will be unbelieving flesh; ever expecting sensation instead of faith, though it be directly contrary to God's method of salvation. Man fell by disbelieving; and he is raised again through believing. He is to trust God for every thing, before he can have the true enjoyment of any.

Faith doth not take away all doubting, because it doth not take away the body, nor the indwelling of sin in that body; but it subdues the reigning fury and the raging prevalence of doubting. It mightily attacks the body of sin, which is the grand cause of doubting. Sometimes it gives the Christian such clear views, as makes him wonder how he could doubt at all. And yet the doubting will again and again return, though perhaps with less frequency and strength. Its sudden attacks, however, are very distressing: and these are permitted of God, in order to show, that the soul is not to live by any thing imparted to it here, but simply and continually by that faith, which

leads the soul out of itself to God in all its views and desires.

This is a difficult, though a daily lesson. Lord, teach it thy servant; or the knowledge will be too excellent and sublime for him to attain it! Let it also be not a lesson of theory and notion only, but of practice and experience, that I may become skilful in the word of righteousness, that it may “dwell richly in me in all wisdom,” and that I may know how to repel by it the sad assaults, which, while I am here, will daily be made against me. “O let thy mercies come to me, O Lord; even thy salvation, according to thy word: so shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me, for I trust in thy word!”

CHAPTER II.

How have I received Christ?

THE Apostle says, “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” I must therefore receive him, before I can walk in him at all. It is a matter of the deepest consequence to my soul, that I should do both.

How, then, Lord, did I receive thee? Did I seek thee first, by my own will? Alas! I was gone out of the way, like all other men; I was altogether become abominable, having no will for good, but only for evil. Did I resolve to seek thee by my

best endeavours? I must confess, with shame and sorrow, that my resolutions are weaker to me than Samson's bands were in his full strength to him; and that the first or the least temptation led me away. Could my sincere obedience merit thy favour? I see, that if a man could sincerely obey in his natural state, but which indeed he cannot, having no love to the work, but only a slavish fear of hell; Lord, I see that thy law requires, if I would be saved by thy law, a sinless and perfect obedience, instead of this sincere and defective one, upon pain of my utter destruction. Thou hast said in thy word, that "he who offendeth in one point, is guilty of all," and that "by the deeds of the law shall no man living be justified." How then could I, who have offended in so many points, be saved? How then didst thou, in thy righteousness, bring me to expect salvation?

Lord, I was poor, and vile, and miserable; I was helpless, yet laden with iniquities; I was wounded, and lying in my blood; my case and condition no man knew, or, knowing it, could relieve. In the midst of my misery, was the appointed moment of thy mercy. Into my deepest wounds thou didst pour thy oil and thy wine. Thou alone cheered my heart with thy free salvation. In the view of what Christ had done and suffered for poor sinners like me, and by thy gracious power applying his twofold merit, joy and gladness came into my soul, yea, greater than any found by men of the earth, "when their corn, and wine, and oil, have increased."

Thy word was the instrument, and thy Spirit the worker. He new-created me in Christ Jesus; he renewed me in the spirit of my mind; he made darkness light before me, and rough places plain. By his teaching I know thy truth, by his grace I enjoy it, by his power I am kept therein, and shall be kept, I trust, to the end. Lord, all the glory of conversion wrought in me, and of thy complete salvation wrought for me, wholly belongeth unto thee from beginning to end!

It was in this way I received Christ; and thy word, O Lord, assureth me it is the true way; because it giveth to thee all the glory, and secureth to me all the benefit. In this way of humbly receiving, I must also walk continually. I have nothing of my own but sin. Thou hast nothing, O my Redeemer, but grace and mercy for thy people. Help me to receive out of this eternal fulness grace for grace, according to my need, that I may walk unto all well-pleasing, and adorn thy doctrine in all things. I would love much, because much hath been forgiven me. I would serve heartily, because thou hast kindly done great things indeed for me. I would live holily, because it is the way to thy kingdom, and the very happiness of thy kingdom itself. Let, let me, my Saviour, be more like unto thee; for, Lord, I would be thine, and only thine, for ever!

Thus my heart often venteth its desires: though at times it is unsteady, dull, and ready to droop under the weight and grossness of a sinful body. I have no remedy for this malady but Christ, sought for in humble prayers. And when my prayers are

faint and drooping, as they too frequently are, I bewail and am sick of myself; but I dare not leave him, lest a worse evil befall me. I therefore, in compunction of spirit, cast myself down before him as low as I can, praying for prayer, and entreating him that he would not leave me to my evil self, but enliven my soul with an answer of peace. When I can put forth this act of faith, there is often peace in the act itself which refreshes me, and usually comfort follows upon it, or (what is better) more faith to throw all upon him, and to live more by him, for the time to come.



CHAPTER III.

How do I live upon Christ ?

ALAS ! my soul, in spiritual things, thou too often livest upon thyself. Thou seekest in frames, in forms, in creatures, and in animal life, what is only to be found in thy Redeemer, even a right inward peace and stability of mind. Outward duties are well in their place, but they have no divine life in themselves, and can give none to thee. They are to be performed, but not trusted in; to be used with grace, but not to buy grace. They are as the scaffold to the building, a *mean* for carrying on the spiritual work, but not the *end* of the great design. In the power of Christ they are blessings; without his power, they have no life or help in them.

Many treat the ordinances as a fair substitute for a serious and constant watchfulness over themselves, for patient devotedness to God, and for real holiness of heart and life, instead of the mean, and only the mean, which the Lord hath appointed, for leading up the soul to all this, as their proper and indispensable end. By such worshippers, the holy means are turned into a profane and detestable idol (as was the case with some of old, Isaiah lxvi. 3.) in the sight of the Lord, who doth not regard lip-service, nor any carnal or corporal attentions only, "but the poor and the contrite spirit," that can tremble at, while it hears and believes, his holy word.

Remember this for thyself, O my soul. Thy first and last trust must be in Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Without him, all prayers, praises, rites, and ordinances, dwindle into carcasses without a soul. Every performance will be carnal and corporal, unless the Saviour fills it with his Divine Spirit: and when this comes, then there is a sweet communion of heart, and reviving of the soul after Christ: then there appears a delightful view behind the veil of outward ordinances, such as no carnal eye can behold, of the Lord in his goodness, beauty, grandeur, blessedness, and glory.

Mere professors stick in the flesh, and mistake the worship of the body, and the motion of the lips, for the love, taste, action, and adoration of the soul. Religion is too sublime for those, who are rather carried through a course than live in it. The road indeed may be a good one; but these no more travel therein, than a corpse in a hearse can be said to be making a journey.

My soul, thy life and thy liveliness are all laid up in Christ, and to be drawn from him according to thy need. Thou hast no stock left to thy own disposal. As the manna was received daily from above, so thou must live out of thyself for thy spiritual daily bread. Having pleaded thy pardon by his blood, and thy justification by his righteousness, thou must live on him for grace still to plead both, to enjoy both, to commune with him from time to time, to deny thyself, to renounce the world and the devil, to master corruptions, to be growing wiser in his word, and more rich in its experience, and, in short, to use him for thine all in all. The whole of this is spiritual, therefore difficult work; and thou art quite unable to perform it in any respect, but through that strength which is made perfect in weakness. If Christ indeed be thy life, then, because he liveth, thou shalt live also.

In living thus upon Christ, thou art to live above thyself, and certainly above every thing, which thou thyself canst perform. This is the true and sublime life of the "inner man," which is not corruptible, nor dependeth for vigour upon corruptible things. It is therefore a hidden life. "Ye are dead," says the Apostle, "and your life is hid with Christ in God." No outward or carnal eye can see it at all, except in some of its holy outward effects, the true excellence of which it cannot apprehend: and the spiritual understanding of other believers can only discern its inward truth and growth, but in proportion as they themselves are spiritually grown up in Christ Jesus the Lord. A mere reasoner in religion, knows nothing of the matter.

As thou art not to live upon thyself, O my soul, so thou canst not live this true life by the aid or opinion of others. If they are instruments of grace to thee, it is thy heavenly Father who employeth them for that end. They themselves, as well as thou, must live upon him for all their wisdom, grace, and strength, and not "by the life of their own hand." Christ is, and must be, as much their life as he is thine.

Thou sometimes waxest and wanest in thy duties, as the moon in her light. At one time, thou art full of spiritual appetite and vigour; at another, in lowness and want of strength. The cause is not in the Sun of Righteousness, who is always alike; but in thee who turnest not the same aspect always to him, and therefore hast not always the same light and heat. If thou thinkest to get brightness from the stars around thee, instead of thy Sun, thou wilt be like the dark part of the moon turned away from the natural sun, which often scarcely appears, or, when it doth, appears very dull. In all providences, ordinances, and situations, Christ must be thy point of view, thy succour, thy light, thy life, and thy all; or they will be found, however excellent in his hand, only beggarly elements in thine.

In all things that are truly divine and spiritual, the flesh soon becomes weary, and flags, and fails. When the exercise grows difficult especially, then corrupt nature soon declines, and cannot sustain or endure the toil. Hence it is, that so many seem to receive the word with joy, and to run well for a time, who, when persecutions or trials arise, having

no root in themselves, begin to find dislikes and offences, and so presently fall away. Their fallow hearts have not been broken up deeply enough by the gospel-plough (that is, the law) to cover well the gospel-seed. The seed of the word hath never been "hidden in the heart;" and so hath taken no root downward in humble and secret contrition, nor grown into substance upwards, to "bring forth fruit unto perfection."

This hidden and spiritual life is often most active and strong, when the flesh is lowest and hath least to do. "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord; for he is raised up out of his holy habitation." When the Lord is risen upon the soul, all that is weak and carnal is as nothing before him. A sweet proof of this may sometimes be found in sick and dying believers. How do they triumph in spirit, with a glorious liveliness, over all the debilities of a dying body! "When their heart and their flesh fail," God then appears most eminently to be the very "strength of their heart, and their portion for ever."

There is a "knowledge of Christ after the flesh," which will carry men a great way into all the splendours of religious profession. It shall make a man look and talk seriously; carry him constantly to ordinances; give him great personal zeal and confidence; enable him to be very exact in all outward discipline and form of doctrine; nay, it shall bring him with a fervent activity (if a minister) into the pulpit, help him to deliver perhaps sound discourses with seeming earnestness and able oratory, so that

multitudes shall hear and admire, and possibly be wrought upon by him; and yet in himself it may be mere flesh, and the poor low knowledge of Christ by the flesh, after all. There is sometimes a little true life in this, and then it is strengthened and refined by trials and temptations; but when there is none, then by time or trouble, or some other thing, it will finally fall away: "If they had really been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us."

O my soul, there are depths of Satan as well as of God; and there is no security for thee, but in renouncing the flesh, and all the secret as well as open works of the flesh, and by following Jesus thoroughly in the regeneration. In the poverty of carnal nature, the Lord will manifest the riches of his grace. Thou must be poor in thine own spirit, or thou canst not be rich in his. "He filleth the hungry with good things; but those that are increased with their own goods, he will always send empty away."

O Lord, look upon me a poor and helpless creature, who cannot so much as look up to thee for aid, without thy special grace for that end. How can I live upon thee, my Saviour, unless thou come down to me in this dark and wretched world, and visit me with thy salvation! I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord; and I would still patiently wait in all the ways of thine appointment, expecting thy presence in the troubled pool to bless me. I expect thee, and only thee. None else can do me good. My soul craveth for true and immortal life, and this is thy gift: O give it unto me. In all thy

means of grace, let my heart wait for thy grace by the means. "Teach me to bless thee for means, when I have them; and to trust thee for means, when I have them not; yea, to trust thee without means, when I have no hope of them." Without thy presence all outward things are barren and dry; and my soul can find no sustenance: lead me, O my gracious Shepherd, by thine own hand to the green pastures, and beside the waters of thy holy rest; restoring my soul, and conducting me in the paths of righteousness for thy name's sake. So shall I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, neither fearing nor finding any evil, and at length arrive at the heavenly house of my God, in which I shall dwell for ever and ever.

CHAPTER IV.

On Self-seeking.

As they that are in the flesh cannot please God at all: so they that follow the flesh in any instance, do so far displease him. This flesh is a subtle adversary, and will creep into our duties as well as our sins; mixing itself, under a thousand forms, into almost all that we can say, or think, or do.

Who could expect to feel this deceiver in the deepest contrition of soul, or to find him in peals of groans and showers of tears? Yet self will endeavour to make a man proud of this very humility, be

plumed upon his own abasements, and be fancying himself something, in the midst of his confessions about his vileness and nothingness.

A poor soul shall own itself, with much pain and sincerity, to be a miserable sinner; and self, from this very acknowledgment, will stir up a notion of worth in the creature, and give it to believe, that there are some seeds, at least, of excellency within itself, which others have not, and for having of which he is higher or better than they. Self will bid some men confess themselves sinners, that they may be considered as saints. To take them at their word, would mortify and displease them.

When the heart of the believer is melted in duty, and enjoys the liveliest frame of communion and love; how often and how much is self to be found therein, either attempting to puff up with a high opinion, or to instil a carnal security, concerning its spiritual interest and welfare? If it can abate the power and watchfulness of faith, it will lay a ground of distress to the believer in the next trial; so that he will soon find himself to be yet in the flesh, and that, as one says, "He must never think to put off his armour, till he is ready for others to put on his shroud."

A man may appear excellent in religious conversation, and be eminent in public duties; he may speak and write much, and perhaps well, upon the things of God, and may recommend them with zeal to others; and yet so much of self may be in all, that, when he looks over his heart and discovers it, he will rather find reason to be ashamed of the whole,

than to be satisfied with any one part of it. I know not, whether, in writing these pages, there be not so much of this evil mixing itself, as to defile and almost nullify any good that may be in them. And though I can humbly look to God for the sincerity and uprightness of my general aim, yet such are my apprehensions of my own carnality, vanity, emptiness, and self-love, and of the sinfulness of giving them indulgence, in serious things especially, that I am sometimes inclined to throw the whole aside. I see this hateful principle in almost every thing I can say or do, and am ashamed of myself, and of it; but still it rises again and again, though often detected; and therefore I am obliged continually to cast myself, with a redoubled sense of my mean, weak, vain, and vile condition by nature, upon the sole and free mercy of God my Saviour.

In success of duty for God, and in being the instrument of good to others, this selfishness of our hearts will endeavour, if not to rob God entirely of his glory, yet at least to share with him in it. Self will be pleased, because we ourselves have been concerned, because we have been honoured, and because by us the Lord hath been magnified in the souls of others. It is self which is vexed, when this is not the case, and when we have toiled for nothing, or others have caught the fishes. Whereas our spirits should rejoice in the will of the Lord, and be as much pleased when his work prospers in other hands, as in our own. And thus indeed they would rejoice, if this corrupt self did not mix with and seek its own establishment in the most spiritual exer-

cises of our souls. We too much forget, that we are only instruments, and that we can do no more of ourselves for God, than our pens can write down our thoughts, when not taken up by our hands.

All this may serve to show, what a severe jealousy we should hold concerning ourselves. We should not only pray, but watch unto prayer; we should both perform our religious duties with zeal, and should well examine the zeal with which we perform them; we should abound in every work and labour of love, and should entreat for wisdom and grace, that flesh and self may not abound in them too; we should ask again and again for a single eye and a simple heart, that all the glory of every good may be given to God its right owner, and that we may be kept in our true place, admiring his mercy, and showing forth entirely his honour and praise.



CHAPTER V.

On the different appearances of Grace in different Persons.

“THERE are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all.” Some believers are remarkable for the strength of their faith in trials even unto death; others for their liveliness and activity in duty; others for their wisdom, conduct, and prudence, both in temporals and spirituals; others for their zeal in defence of the truth; others

for their knowledge in the mysteries of the truth; others for their patience, meekness, and gentleness; others for their submission to the will of God; others for outward usefulness in the church; and others for an inward and spiritual life of communion with God. But all these are the various gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, "dividing to every man severally as he will," and not the talents or abilities of fallen nature. They are also "given to every man" who hath them, "to profit withal," according to his place in the church or in the world. He, who hath one of these graces, should not undervalue or despise him who hath another; for the Giver is the same, though his gifts may be granted for different ends.

Very often particular graces are bestowed to counteract and oppose particular corruptions, of which the Lord himself can be the only true judge. Some situations of Christians require gifts of grace, which might be less necessary, or less manifestive of the divine glory in others, than they would be in them. The Lord distributeth wisely and kindly to all his people, according to their day and duty, or according to his own designs in them and for them. But they are all of them his workmanship, and could, not more in grace than in nature, either create or fashion themselves.

This should teach thee, my fellow-christian, a lesson of forbearance to thy brethren. It is not right for thee to judge another by thine own pattern. He may have graces, not less pleasing to God, nor less useful in their purpose, than those which are given to thee. Art thou a warm and active Chris-

tian? Condemn not him whose endowments may be more placid and contemplative than thine. He who now creeps as a snail in humble silence, may, by one lift of divine power, get into heaven before thee, and perhaps be raised higher there than thou. God judgeth not like man, according to the outward show, but according to the secret riches of his love. Art thou a quiet and retired believer? Do not censure him who is called forth to more stirring duty than thou art. Though his work may seem less spiritual to thee, it may be to introduce designs of providence and grace, which only God can foreknow, and which may be the means of carrying out his saving power far and wide. Some of the first reformers were less remarkable for a quiet and gentle spirit, than others who have followed them; but these last do not seem so fit instruments for grappling with papal outrage and tyranny as they were. When rough work is to be done, men use the axe and the saw; but, for gentler operations, the plane, the razor, or the knife. These last would not cut down a forest; nor would the first serve to polish or smooth.

Honour then the work and blessing of God upon his people, in what form soever it may be found. Every member hath his appointed office from him. It is self-love and conceit, which disparage others; and these we will not call "gifts from above," but rather worms from beneath, which seek to gnaw the root of the vine. Covet, indeed, and earnestly, the best gifts; but the love of God and man, is, after all, the more excellent way.

CHAPTER VI.

On the Difference of Myself from Myself.

LORD, how variable a creature am I ! Unstable as water, changeable as wind, different as the weather, when I am left, in any instance or degree, to myself. One of our English kings, from his slackness, was called *the unready*; and the same name, with respect to my best concerns, will too often serve for me.

Sometimes I have a fair day of comfort and hope; but the clouds come on again, and gather blackness over my soul. *Suavis hora, brevis mora*: short and sweet was the hour of my spiritual delight; but the time of my dulness and drooping hath been frequent and long.

Blessed be thy name, O Lord, that my real state with thee doth not depend upon my vigour, liveliness, and constancy, but upon those only sure grounds, thy faithfulness, mercy, omnipotence, and truth. Whatever I am or may be in myself, thou art and wilt be always the same, and always the same to me.

The time, or rather the eternity, is at hand, when my state will be unchangeable, and my frames will be unchangeable too. The crowns of glory cannot fade; nor those who wear them alter or decay. I shall both know, as I am known, and in all things shall be like to my immutable and glorious Saviour, when I get into his kingdom.

Why then should my present variations distress me? I live not by them, nor for them, but upon a higher principle, and for a more exalted end. This is the time of faith, in which I must wrestle, and labour, and strive, against all the disadvantages of an evil nature and an evil world; and I am to look for strength from Christ, who will be honoured in my weakness and deficiency, which compel me to give up myself incessantly to him. He is engaged to preserve me by his own oath and unchangeable covenant; and therefore, come fair, come foul; let me have either comfort or sorrow; all must be well at the last, for he hath promised, and most assuredly will give me, a safe, and abundant entrance into heaven.

CHAPTER VII.

On Bridling the Tongue.

IT hath been a frequent confession of wise and good men, that they have often lamented their speaking too much, but seldom their holding the tongue. In the multitude of words there will be some folly, something that will not tend to edification, something that may rather weary and offend, than delight and inform.

This evil of over-speaking usually comes from an over-weening opinion of self. Unchastised and unsubdued self is fond of its own display; although it

can display nothing, or, were it not deceiving and deceived, nothing but its own wretchedness and ruin. The Apostle hath a striking hint for professors of religion: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain."

What is our end in religious conversation? If we speak without a purpose, surely it is folly. If we speak for our own praise, it is a wrong to our own souls, and a robbery of God. If we speak for his honour, and the edification of others, we should look up to him for his blessing, that our words, as they ought, may be weighty and wise. In this humble dependence upon God, and with a warm and generous concern for the spiritual welfare of others, our discourse may be comfortable and edifying, both to them and to ourselves. A word in season, thus spoken, may be remembered and blessed. The more of this kind of conference the better; care being taken of the spirit in which we speak, of the time and propriety of speaking, and of not mixing other things, as is too often the case, with our religious discourse, which may render it trifling or unsavoury. When we have said all that we could wish to say upon divine things, it will be profitable to withdraw, that there may be a due opportunity for reflection, meditation, digestion, and prayer.

CHAPTER VIII.

Upon False Appearances.

THE whole world walketh in a masquerade, or, as the Scripture calls it, an image or “-vain show.” Scarce any man would appear as he is, but as he is not, before others; and he loves to indulge even his own mind in the same deceitful view of himself. The more artfully he can put on the veil, the finer man he seems, often in his own esteem, generally in the esteem of others; and nothing mortifies him more than when some wind of trial blows this veil but a little aside, so that others perceive a part at least of what he hath been always very industrious to conceal.

This disguiseful clothing is the handy-work of evil and corrupt nature, fallen from the truth and purity of God into a strong love and likeness of the perplexed and foolish subtlety, which fully occupies that being who is the father and author of lies from the beginning. To plead for this dissimulation as some have done, is to turn advocate for the evil one, whose fees are vanity and vexation in this world, and something worse in the world to come.

Our depraved nature cannot bear to see its own wickedness, and much less to have it exposed. What shifts and turns, what labours and difficulties, will it not encounter, to obtain a great name and opinion, although it be but a false one? And how will it be

delighted, as with a prize, in the fleeting breath of dying creatures, who have only for a memorial of themselves some filthy monument of sin or of shame? To be open and sincere, is counted a weakness; because it lowers a man's power of taking those advantages for interest and fame, which all men by nature are pursuing, and which, in a state of nature, they think to be the only object worth pursuing, as the highest and greatest good.

And, alas! how much of this disguise is brought into the things and church of God! I lament, for one, how prone I am to cheat myself, and to wish more for the esteem of others, than I ought to think of, or than I can possibly deserve! I would be all fair, and valuable, and excellent, and what not, in their esteem; while I am conscious to myself, that there is within me so much vanity, weakness, dullness, wretchedness, and evil, as might justly suffice to render me in their eyes, what any of them, that can look into themselves, must appear to be in their own.

I have displeased some whom I did not intend to displease; and others have offended me, perhaps with a contrary intention. The same persons and myself have been mutually satisfied at one time, and dissatisfied at another; and wherefore? Not because my nature or theirs was better or worse at any time; but only because it sometimes discovered itself more according to the occasion: and when it drops the disguise of goodness which we can regard, or discovers itself too plainly, sinners as we are, we do not love it, so odious and depraved is it become since

the original ruin. We cannot love it in others, nor others because of it; though we are at a world of pains to conceal, to indulge, or to dress off, the ugly monster in ourselves.

It is this depravity, which hath begotten hypocrisy not only in the world at large, or in courts or particular callings of men, where certainly it doth reign absolutely and universally, but also in religious profession, where surely it ought not. It hath reigned especially in this last, since it hath been esteemed a scandal not to be called a Christian. It is true, indeed, that the appearance of religion is certainly better than the appearance of evil; but, however, when men seek to appear religious, for the selfish honour or carnal comfort which may follow from others upon account of it, they only seek themselves, and are but the less truly religious for all their professions.

Why am I grieved if others think lightly of my gracious attainments?—Because I am grown unjustly great in my own esteem for things which are not my own, but given to me. But doth not this very grief prove that their judgment is but too right, and that my real stature is not so tall as I think it? If I were humbled in myself, in some degree, as I ought to be, (for, in the full and just degree, no man can be humbled in this life,) I should approve their sincerity towards me, and contentedly sit down before them in the lowest room. Their low opinion would not hurt me, because it would be the same as my own. The vileness of my heart, and the low progress I have made in Christian experience, are in-

deed sufficient to humble me every day I breathe; and it is only my own blindness, or a falseness to myself, that leads me to forget either my own real condition, or the place where I ought to stand.

We are not naturally honest to ourselves; and we do not wish that others should deal honestly with us. If we were truly honest and wise, (and grace only can make us so in any degree,) we should meekly hear, and even wish to hear, of our own frailties, errors, and defects, that we might grow the true Christian growth, which doth not consist in the favourable opinion of men and of our own minds; but in lowliness of heart, and spirituality of life, respecting ourselves; in patience, quietness, and good-will with regard to others; in contrition, humiliation, and submission before God.

Professors live too much outwardly. Religion is carried often into the strong animal passions, not to subdue, but to feed them. Hence the poor anger and violence of a corrupted nature, are frequently mistaken for zeal, for life, and for power. But noise, and bustle, and tumult, and hurry; the agitations of temper, and strong concerns for influence or authority, or direction, among men; the parade of religion, or the superiority of a party, may all be carried on with very small degrees of real grace, and perhaps with none at all. Diotrephes loved to have the pre-eminence; but this could not suppress his inward bitterness, nor increase the signs of his Christian calling, 3 John 9. If we do not live for God in our religion, we must live outwardly, and so shall endeavour to make a "fair show in the flesh;" but if

we have his presence, indeed, the truest part of our life will be hidden, and we shall much and gladly retire within to enjoy it. The most certain sign of our real growth will be, the sinking into ourselves as vileness and nothing; the being thought meanly of with content, if not pleasure; and the rising up of our souls towards God with private delight, ardour, affection, and constancy. All this may be done before Him who seeth in secret, far better than in the corners of the streets, or places of public resort. We shall aim, through grace, to be gracious, rather than to appear so.

This hidden life my soul pants for, O Lord, thou knowest! whatever becomes of my outward respect among men. If I have the more of thee for the loss of this, it will be indeed a rich amends. Nay, it will be better for me to be without human regards, lest I should grow more proud than I already am, and so lose that blessed sight of thee, which I always enjoy most sweetly and clearly in the deepest renunciation and depression of myself. O make me more and more dead to the opinion of even gracious men, that my poverty and meanness may be ever before me, and that in all forms and circumstances I may constantly be relinquishing myself, so that I may have more inward and intimate fellowship, friendship, complacency, and nearness with thee!

Careless, myself a dying man,
Of dying men's esteem;
Happy, O Lord, if thou approve,
Though all beside condemn.

CHAPTER IX.

On the Spirit of the World.

NOTHING more fully proves the fall of man from his original creation, than the opposition and temper of his soul, while in his natural state, to the things of God. His wishes, his hopes, his labours, his principles of action and thinking, all are turned directly another way. "God is not" really, whatever a man of the world may speculate, "in all his thoughts." He is without God; or rather, in sober truth, he is, as the Apostle calls him, an atheist in the world.

Hence it is, that the people of the world have, in all ages, reputed the people of God either to be fools, in not laying themselves out for such things as wholly engage themselves, or knavish hypocrites, who only take a pretended spiritual method to accomplish the same carnal and selfish ends. And if they can find an instance or two (as they often have done, and may do) to confirm this opinion, O how do they insult over professors of all kinds, and run down religion itself, as though it were a trap or an engine for all manner of deceit, or at best, a whimsical paradise, framed by superstition for dunces and fools.

On the other hand, how wild, mad, besotted, and phrenetic, do all the agitations of these men seem to the Christian, in his retired and considerate hours?

They are pursuing, in his view, lies and shadows, vapours and dreams. They grasp after something, they scarce know what. Ever restless, they are always upon the hunt; but never finding, never satisfied. They live weary and tired lives, full of envy, disappointment, and care: and they die hopeless deaths, either in abject terror at what may come upon them hereafter, or in the stupid opinion, that God created them only to live for a while like maggots upon the trash of the earth, and then at last to be thrown into a hole to rot away into nothing. Such is the sordid spirit and wisdom of this world!

CHAPTER X.

On the Pride of the Heart.

MOST of the discomforts of our lives arise from the pride of our hearts, unmortified and unsubdued. Did I think as meanly and humbly of myself, as from the knowledge of my weakness and sinfulness I ought, the contempt or the insult of others would not hurt or afflict me. But I am false to myself, and therefore lifted up, assuming to my vile nature what it hath no right to expect; and I am false to others, wearing appearances to create respect and esteem; which is walking in a mask, and rendering myself foolishly proud. If men saw me, and I saw them, as we really are, we should none of us be much inclined to boast of ourselves; but our glorying must either cease, or else be wholly in the Lord.

This pride hath occasioned to my soul a world of trouble, both when it hath reigned unsubdued, and while, through grace and trials, it hath been in the acts of subduing.

When it is unsubdued, the heart is open to all manner of mortifications. A look, a gesture, or a word, shall put it to pain; and when this pain rages, the passions will begin to rave, and throw the whole frame into a miserable violence and disorder. Outward opposition will make it worse. The inflammation then grows often to a degree of frenzy, which nothing hardly can sooth or allay. And it is one of the wonders of providence, that this pride of man, when combined and raging in multitudes, doth not confound all order and rules more than it doth, and utterly ruin and destroy the world.

To subdue this sore evil, "the pride of heart and life," and all its effects, in his people, is one great end of God in afflicting dispensations. They are high in themselves; and it is necessary for their good that they should be brought down. Whatever answers this end, come in what shape it may, it is all a blessing.

Did such a one use me ill, or speak contemptuously of me? As David said of Shimei, it is because the Lord hath permitted him.—Hath he treated me as I deserve? Why then am I angry? He hath been to me a messenger of truth, whatever were his intentions, with which I have nothing to do; and, therefore, let me own the truth, and fall down in abasement and contrition before God.—Is the censure false? I have no right to be offended:

He hath not hit me, but himself, and becomes therefore the object of my prayer. If, in this instance, his condemnation hath been wrong; my heart knoweth in how many others, and perhaps in worse, it would have been just and right. In every view, I have no fair claim to be flattered with the applauses of men, but to be humbled in myself for the constant weakness, worthlessness, and evil, that cleave to me in all things. If I felt this as I ought, and walked as I ought, in the continual sense of it, I should be ashamed to be proud, and should abhor myself, for the bold injustice and iniquity of being so, in dust and ashes.

I believe that some Christians have more trials and afflictions in the flesh than others, because their is more natural stubbornness of pride and wilfulness in them. The Lord will have these to be subdued. And he suiteth all his chastisements, with great and unerring wisdom, to the occasion. If they thought of this aright, they would not be so much in care to get rid of the visitation, as to have the design of it answered within them. They would pray to be humbled under the mighty hand of God, that he might exalt them in the right way, and in the due time.

It is my pride, and my self-will, which proceeds from pride, that render me so uneasy with God and with others. Were I truly lowly, and deeply sensible of my own condition, not the opinion and hard words of others, but my own sin, would offend me. I am imperfect, as in all other graces, so especially in humility; and therefore I fret in myself, and am

inclined to speak, and to render evil for evil. O Lord, help me, a poor feeble man, and hide pride from mine eyes! Suffer me not to fall upon this stumbling-block, which hath overturned the world; but help me to follow Jesus, who was meek and lowly in heart, and by him to find rest to my soul!

CHAPTER XL

Comparison between Carnal and Spiritual Wisdom.

CARNAL wisdom is the highest attainment of the carnal mind. It is an exhibition of fallen man in his fairest and most cultivated form; and is therefore the aim and desire of the best of natural men.

This wisdom, (for we will call it at present by that name,) arising from a depraved and corrupt principle, is necessarily weak and corrupt likewise. It seeks earthly and carnal things; is occupied entirely upon them, and looks no higher, and finds no more, when left to its own inclinations and powers. This wisdom, therefore, is called, in the Scripture, "earthly, sensual, devilish." It acts only upon and for this present world: it is plunged in the sensuality and designs of it through an earthly evil nature: it is, like Satan, in total opposition to the will and holiness of God, serving, as its last end, the creature instead of the Creator.

Thus the learned man is proud of his knowledge, as it gives him superiority over others: the states-

man, by his political understanding, pursues and triumphs in his own grandeur: the merchant, by his skill in trade, heaps up to himself riches: the mechanic, by his art and ingenuity, assumes his peculiar distinction: the carnal divine (for such a one there may be) is learned, and zealous for his party or profession, or for his own carnal exaltation in it. In short, it is no matter whether the means be high or low, but every natural man, of every condition, employs all his understanding and all his powers for carnal views, for earthly glory, and for temporal attainments. If his plans are calculated for these, and especially if they succeed, he is admired, applauded, and admitted to be a great, a wise, or an extraordinary person.

But alas! how vain and perishing, how delusive and unsatisfactory, is this short-lived wisdom, and all that it can seek after or find! To what purpose are the eager wearisome toils and cares, the studious anxieties and restless pursuits, of all the millions of mortals in ages past, whose airy glory is forgotten, and whose very names are extinguished and lost? And, if not lost and extinguished, yet of what value or consequence are they now, beyond the fleeting idea and imagination of mortals like themselves? And to how few, even in this last poor way, doth the remembrance extend? And how unknown and insignificant is all this paper-glory to the owners, whose very image is departed from the world on which they doted?

This is the highest prize of all earthly wisdom: and is not this perfectly fanciful, fleeting, trivial,

and vain? In the grave all its thoughts perish, equally with the low notions and opinions of the ignorant and the foolish, the poor and the despised.

But there is a wisdom, which, unlike the other, deserves the name, and being no production of this corrupted earth, but coming from above, is pure and spiritual in its nature, and, in all its purposes and effects, true, real, lasting, and happy.

Its origin is in grace from Him, who is the Fountain of wisdom. And its first effect is in the renunciation and abasement of self, as that which is false and contrary. Thus the fear of the Lord is the beginning, or first-fruits which the soul can present, of wisdom; and thus a man must become a fool, that he may be wise. This wisdom sees the ignorance of all other pretended wisdom, detects its base and grovelling pursuits, and lifts up the soul, not to a temporary dying fame, which is often infamy with God, but to a solid and perpetual good. It discovers the deceivableness of unrighteousness in the heart and in the world, the poorness of every thing out of Christ, and the great value of Christ and of the soul above all other things. It doth not lift up a man in himself, as a great and glorious doctor for human admiration; but it makes him low in his own eyes, through a view of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; and it keeps him from aiming at vain glory, as being a kind of treason against God, and as an unjust attainment for himself, a poor, dependent, ignorant sinner. The Christian, made wise to salvation, dreads to be left to his own wisdom; because he knows that blindness is its other and its truer name.

Christ is made, of God, wisdom to the believer. He spake as never man spake; and none teacheth like him. He often gives a poor and ignorant countryman such instructions, as render him abundantly more wise than the mere scholar by all the florid pomp of the schools. So' ingrafted too are his instructions, that the art of man, and the sophistry of Satan, cannot baffle those who possess them. His knowledge is solid, and real, and enjoyable; such as the heart can feel, the soul live by, the spirit exult in, the whole man act upon, amidst a thousand trials in the world, and in the nearest prospect of death and eternity.

Possessing this wisdom, how serenely can the Christian look down upon the bustling cares and pursuits of men; upon their honours, their pleasures, their riches: even as a man of great natural wisdom would look down upon the follies and recreations of boys! Toys and games employ the attention of children, and engage their passions, though frivolous and fleeting: and are the solitudes of men, and of old men too, less idle or extravagant, when they lay out all their time, and strength, and souls, for that which profiteth not even here, and which none pretend to be profitable in the day of wrath? What poor things are these of the world in the hours of sickness and pain? and how much poorer still in the hour of approaching death? Honours, titles, and estates, cannot remove a pang, nor give one drop of consolation; but, in many cases, afford a wish of dismal remorse to their owners, that they had never obtained them. There is, I fear, more than one

Dives in eternity, who laments that he had not been a hundred times poorer and sorer than any Lazarus (with grace) was or could be in this world.

True wisdom proves its own worth by obtaining a proper and valuable end. On the other hand, that cannot be real, but delusive wisdom, which is always working and promising, and at last concludes in nothing, or nothing but ruin. But this is the most which is attained by the wisdom of this world, spiritually viewed : it gains air and dirt, a name and a perishing good (if a good) below ; and then it ceases to act, leaving its poor possessor only misery and disappointment, except a fearful expectation of an unwished and unwelcome hereafter. Can the end of the merest idiot be more stupid and unwise ?

Without a doubt, the affairs of this life must be carried on, and the Christian must more or less be engaged in them ; but the wisdom of grace in his soul will teach him, that there are also other affairs to mind ; affairs of infinitely more moment to him than all the world put together. If he should gain the utmost or the whole of this earth, and lose himself and the end of his being, where would be his profit and advantage ? People who can speculate clearly and nicely for gains in common matters, would do well to carry their thoughts of profit and loss a little farther towards the end of time, when all things are to be balanced and settled for ever.

Lord, above all wisdom of earth, and earthly gain, may I obtain that wisdom which leadeth to a happy immortality, and which shall abide with me beyond the bounds of time ! I am a poor dying creature,

going fast out of this world, and almost upon the very threshold of another. O help me to see then, what can truly profit, or what can really hinder me, that "the loins of my mind" may be girt up with the girdle of saving wisdom, and that I may always be so running as at length to obtain the crown! O preserve my heart from that unwise wisdom, which layeth up what must soon be lost, and squanders away what can never be regained! which thinketh much of airy trifles, and almost not at all, or not at all to purpose, of an unperishing good! of a good which thy Spirit hath called "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled; a crown of glory that fadeth not away; a building of God eternal in the heavens; a kingdom which cannot be shaken; a blessedness, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man; yea, rivers of joy and pleasure for evermore!"—Lord, if thou give but the wisdom to obtain these, I shall very soon cease to lament the want of all wisdom beside!

CHAPTER XII.

On Independence.

MEN desire what is called independent fortunes, through their natural arrogance, and fond indulgence to their flesh. And because believers are flesh as well as spirit, therefore, in proportion as that flesh is spiritually uncircumcised and unsubdued, even do

these require this meat of the world for their lust. It is very irksome to a believer's carnal nature, that he lives in his spirit the life of faith; and it will be more and more irksome to nature, as this life grows in him and is proved by trials, which tend to deny or abridge his earthly desires. The flesh cannot delight in any thing that doth not gratify its senses; but the life of the spirit consists greatly in "crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts;" in trusting God, through a naked promise, for what is yet unseen; and in giving up will, hope, desire, and every thing within and without, to his disposal. This is all horrid and dismal, yea, death itself, to the natural man. He hates, and abhors, and scoffs, and sets all his wits and passions at work to cry down a life so strange and peculiar, that he must even die to himself and all he loves, before he can live it. But whosoever will save this life of the carnal mind, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose it, shall, by the mercy of God, find a better, even a life of confidence and communion with Christ Jesus.

This principle of independence, or aversion to live in simple trust upon God, is the secret cause why many professors "hasten to be rich, or will be rich in this world, though by it they fall into a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in ruin and perdition." "If I can get such and such a fortune, I will do so and so," say they, "and then serve God without distraction." But the flesh is not to be laid asleep by indulgence, nor the fire to be put out by heaping up fuel. Experience shows, that large possessions do much oftener

damp any little life or zeal for God, than quicken the Christian's hope and concern for a better world.

The spirit of faith teaches another lesson. It bids a man "commit all his way to the Lord," and rather to fear than to court great riches, knowing what mischiefs and wretchedness they have brought upon many who once seemed to run well; and knowing also the natural desire of the carnal mind to covet these things merely for its own food and feasting.

The goodness of God, therefore, providentially keeps his children, for the most part, poor in this world, that they might live in the fuller trust and dependence upon himself. He that doth not expect much from this world, cannot be much disappointed by it. When a man hath little or nothing before him, he looks to the best help: so the poor Christian sees that God is his best help, and therefore lives humbly upon his bounty. In this way of continual trust and daily dependence, and not by fulness of bread, or independence, he is made "rich in faith" through additional experiences, and walks with more and more strength and sweetness of spirit as "an heir to the kingdom."

On the other hand, how many rich professors are there who plead their very situations in life, as so many false reasons why they should be gay and splendid; why they should see all sorts of fine company, no matter of whom; why they should have pompous equipage and luxurious tables; and why, in short, they should have every thing in dress, manner, and custom, which the poor, vain, foolish, unmortified flesh can desire to have? They seem not to see,

that in all this they are living to themselves or to earth, and not to God or his glory among men. How it is that they support faith at any rate, with every indulgence and ease to the flesh, with full conformity to the world, and with an entire good opinion of the world, I know not; but this I know, that, if the true life be supported amidst so much contagion and disease, it is because "all things are possible with God," though with men this, among others, is impossible. I speak not against rank and station, for these are providential appointments and necessary in themselves; but against the abuse of these to pride, sloth, vanity, and all the common evils and excesses of a polluted world. And I believe also, that I do not speak from envy or chagrin; for I really know not the man in this world, with whom I should wish or dare to wish an exchange of situation.

Lord, let me have what is best for my true life and welfare, and that only. Make me contented in thy allotment. I have often been otherwise, and am still prone to desire unnecessary and dangerous things. O forgive me this error and blindness, and correct the madness of my proud and rebellious heart by the fervent faithful life of thy Holy Spirit. So shall I desire only what will please thee, and be content in my soul with what thou givest, or when thou deniest, however my flesh may strive to murmur and repine. O hear me; and let my whole trust, my God, be in thee!

CHAPTER XIII.

On Worldly Grandeur.

To a Christian, living and walking as becomes his heavenly calling, how poor and creeping, how idle and vain, how foolish and wretched, is the common eager pursuit after high distinctions in the world! They not only come up, and are cut down, like the grass, withering into dust and oblivion; but while they appear, they are empty and fleeting shadows, or (if it can be conceived) the very "shadows of a shade." If viewed at a distance, they seem solid as a mountain; if embraced closely, they are found but a cloud. Their possessors are poor, because ever in want. One blast of honour will not serve him that wishes for two: nor a thousand him that can hope for more. The dominion of Europe would make a natural man pant for Asia; and he that cannot be satisfied without an additional province or river, would not be satisfied with this whole world if he had it, but (like Alexander) would grasp after and lament for another. Whatever a natural man hath, it is no matter: he never has enough; he always wants more. Consequently, he is poor; and he is wretched, because he perpetually feels himself poor. He hath both miseries from his poverty, and torments from his pride.

The real Christian is enabled to pity the anxious absurdity and vexatious vanity of those things which

are the great jet and concern of the worldly great and worldly wise. He looketh indeed for a name, but it is for "an everlasting name, which cannot be cut off." He is not content to be happy only for a few days or years, but desires to be blessed and joyful for thousands and millions of ages to come. He longs for a crown, but it is for "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." He pants for a kingdom, but it is for the kingdom of Christ and of God. He is really a person of boundless ambition; for nothing less will serve him than the infinite realms of everlasting glory. Riches are much upon his heart; but they are the durable, the unsearchable riches of Christ. He cannot be put off with the paltry cares and thorny honours of worldly greatness; but nobly pursues, and with certainty too, the very happiness and grandeur of God himself, even that very glory which Christ received from the Father, and which, as their head, he will share with his members.

Compared with this, all the pride and glory of man appear but as stubble or falsehood, the mere dream of a shadow, a nothing. And if human greatness can appear thus in the believer's ideas now, what will it seem when the earth itself shall be dissolved, and the Babylon of sin upon it shall be thrown down into perpetual ruins?

O what is earth, if heaven be mine?
 Or what its dying toys?
 I seek, I burn for wealth divine,
 For God's immortal joys!

CHAPTER XIV.

On Worldly Company.

ALL things may be lawful, but all are not expedient. It may be lawful for a Christian to be much among the men of this world, and, in some cases, it may be necessary, for the discharge of lawful callings; but it is not expedient, certainly, to be more among them than is thus strictly proper and necessary. Either the Christian must enter into their spirit, or they into his, before they can be agreeable companions. If he take up their spirit, surely it will soon be to his grief and his burden. And it is very unlikely that they should come into his; unless God might bless his faithful conversation to the good of their souls. But this is seldom the case in worldly company, and especially in the company of many worldly men together. The corruptions of one will bear up and harden the corruptions of another; and he that perhaps would not have jeered alone, will scoff by sympathy with a mocking crowd. It is best to speak of spiritual things with carnal men by themselves; when common decency may force them to give a patient hearing, even though grace may not crown the discourse with a blessing. A whole herd may only trample upon your jewels, and then turn again to rend you.

That man's religion is much to be doubted of, who frequents the society of the men of this world

for satisfaction and pleasure. "How can two," even two only, "walk together, unless they be agreed?" "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you," saith Christ, "out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

Can a man touch filth and not be defiled; or fire and not be hurt? How much less then can a man conform to the spirit of this world, without pollution to his soul, or without feeling the loss of that peace, if he ever had it, which the world can neither give nor take away? It is no wonder that men complain of spiritual falls and desertions, when they stand upon "slippery places," and leave the presence of God for the presence of mammon. How can a heart, reeking from the hot dunghill of this filthy world, be offered as a sweet-smelling savour to God, or hope to be accepted with returns of his heavenly fire?

CHAPTER XV.

The Manners of the World are hurtful and hindering to Believers.

THE Apostle declared it, as his privilege, that "the world was crucified to him, and he to the world." Another Apostle says, that "whosoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." And Christ assures us, that "we cannot serve God

and mammon ;” insomuch, that if we would approve ourselves to be his disciples, “ we must take up our cross daily, and follow him.”

This is very evident ; they who are the most given to the modes of this world, and mix most with its customs and pursuits, are the least alive to God, and the least lively in the things of God. Gaiety and foppery of dress, mimicry of worldly pride and parade, the hollow language of fashionable companies and friendships, do ill become a Christian, and never promote his true welfare. It is not indeed the custom at this day to say such things to professors ; but they are not, however, the less true, or the less needful.

Poor and wretched are all these fooleries, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and especially when they thrust out the enjoyment of things divine. To have gay bodily apparel with cold and naked souls ; to possess fulness of bread with emptiness of grace ; to enjoy much worldly company, and lose the society of God and his saints ; to be esteemed polite and genteel in manners with men, and to be awkward and dumb in addresses to God, is all such a complication of folly, meanness, misery, and sin, as a Christian, in his right mind, should be amazed at and abhor.

Are we loved by the world ? It is for this reason, the world will love its own. But how then are we “ chosen out of the world ?” How then can we belong to Christ, whom the world hateth ?—This trimming between God and the world is neither for

the comfort of our souls, nor for the credit of our profession.

Do we fear to be censured for singularity and precision? A Christian must be singular; for he is one of those who are "not to be numbered with the nations," a stranger, and a pilgrim, or passenger here; and he must be precise, neither loving the world, nor living for the world, for otherwise "the love of the Father is not in him."

On the other hand, an open and generous civility, a gentle and benevolent deportment, bespeaking sincerity of heart and holiness of life, are truly ornamental to the Christian. In avoiding the ape, a believer needs not stumble upon the bear; nor, in shunning grimace and affectation, to plunge into sourness and brutality. If meekness, patience, gentleness, good-will, and good works, will please all men, it is his duty, by these means, to study to please them. But if they expect his conformity to the world for their pleasure, and are disgusted at the transformation and renewal of his mind, as it is more than probable they will be; it is then his honour and his privilege not in this way to please them, if he would approve himself to be the servant of Christ.

Though the Christian, in one sense, must be in the world, and put his best hand to his business and affairs, according to his lot from God's providence, yet, in another sense, he must come out from the world and be separate, lest his soul be hindered and defiled. He cannot enter into the spirit of the world without injury and loss; and it is the spirit,

not the lawful business of the world, which contains all the evil. In his calling and concerns, a believer is to glorify God: and he is enabled to do this, first, by the prayer of faith over them, and then by the life of faith in them. That business, and those intentions, which will not admit of these, are to be avoided as the very plague.

Lord, how poor and vile are all the gay modes of this world, compared with the simplicity and enjoyment of thy truth! How beggarly and unsatisfying are its vanities, how low and crawling its ambition, how foolish and cheating its hopes, how vain and unprofitable its cares, how various and continual its troubles, how wretched and horrible its end! O give me thy wisdom and love, thy grace and thy truth; for this is that better part which shall never be taken from me!

CHAPTER XVI.

On Conversation among Professors.

THERE are many professors of religion, who are always craving for company. They think, that to be alone is to be dull, and that, without conversing with creatures, they must be silent and stupid, whimsical or melancholy. Such persons are to be pitied, who have not learned the divine secret of talking with God in private by fervent faith and prayer, who know not how to listen to the still small

voice of the Spirit in his holy Word, who cannot find an endless delight in discovering and tasting the sweets of redemption, and who loathe to commune with their own hearts, in their closet or their chamber, and be still.

When such persons get into company, and especially into a great company, they soon discover how unfit, as Christian professors, they are to be in it. The discourse, if of God and his truths, will be light and unsavoury, without unction or solid experience; or if their converse turn, as it generally will, upon men and earthly things, it will only differ from the language and spirit of this world, by being spoken by persons who wish to be thought of as living for another.

It is a melancholy truth, that the levity, dissipation, envy, calumny, and detraction, too often found among companies and parties professedly religious, as well as among the people of the world, make retirement very necessary to the Christian, who would walk much with God, and far more cheerful than the generality of talkative professors can conceive it to be. But the soul which is led to the true enjoyment of divine communion, finds it a relief, rather than a burden, to "cease from man."

The Christian should not, if possible, get into company, but either to impart some spiritual good, or to receive it. If he hath grace and talents for the former, he will, before discourse, secretly look up to God for aid and blessing, and afterwards will desire rather to be humbled for what he could not say, or for the manner of saying it, than to be

pleased on his own account, for any thing he did say, or for the satisfaction afforded to others. If, on the other hand, he hath received edification from godly conversation, he will then pray that it may abide with him, that the sweet savour may not be lost, that it may be carried into lively act and experience, and that, like good seed upon good ground, it may increase with the increase of God, and bring forth fruit abundantly to perfection.

All this implies, that large and mingled assemblies must be more noisy than profitable. There hath been of this at all times very sufficient evidence. Great entertainments, and many persons called together to enjoy them, may serve to keep out the calm serenity and sweet possession of divine reflections, but, perhaps, too rarely promote them. In many words there will probably be errors and folly: nor do numbers in a company always multiply wisdom. The flesh may be gratified and feasted, while the spirit may be starved, and wearied, and dry, and at last be sent empty away. It must be grievous to a real Christian, thus to come out of company a worse or less happy man for entering it.

It is the way of God to "feed his people with the rod" (of his gracious and selecting power,) even "his flock, his heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel," (the field of the world). And they do feed (like Abraham and the patriarchs, who were strangers and pilgrims upon earth,) "in Bashan and Gilead," (the lands appointed for them,) "as in the days of old:" Micah vii. 14. They were ever "a people dwelling alone,"

(in abstraction from the spirit of this world,) “and not reckoned among the nations :” Numb. xxiii. 9.

If I have thee, O my God, I have plenitude of society, though (like the blessed John at Patmos) no creature should be nigh, or though I should be an outcast from all the world. Thou canst talk with me by thy works, by thy providences, and chiefly by thy Spirit and word. O what delight have I felt in the testimonies of thy faithfulness and truth, of thy mercy and grace, of thy presence and love, of thy glory and power! Surely, surely, when I have enjoyed these in their genuine sweetness, retired from every eye but thine, it hath seemed hard to go forth again into the world, or even into the converse of those whom thy own providence and grace have endeared to me. And if this be so divinely delightful, in a mortal body and a miserable world, O what shall my felicity be, when I become a pure exalted spirit, with vivid ecstatic life, in the calm and unspotted regions of glory!—When I think of these unutterable mercies, how can I but long and pant, how can I but hunger and thirst for God, the living God, my God, my own God, and my own for ever!

CHAPTER XVII.

On the Changes of Time.

How do the things of this world pass away ! One generation followeth another, and another that, and so on from age to age, filling up the long rolls of time in melancholy array. They appear long to me, because my rule of comparison is taken from the shortness of human life : but to eternity, to the everlasting existence and infinitude of my God, these ages are almost a nothing. Into this eternity all that can be called time is continually passing, as into a gulph which hath neither bottom nor bound. Thus time is full of changes and vicissitudes, while eternity is not only a perpetual now, but also a perpetual same.

When I look into the histories of ancient days, and review the confusions and violences that have passed, (for the history of the world is little more than a record of its sins;) I ask my heart, to what purpose have all these things been, and where is now the profit to those evil men who promoted them ? Their works are in the dust, or, at best, upon paper ; so that, excepting perhaps for punishment, they have neither remained here, nor followed their authors. All their hopes, and cares, and commotions ; their own restlessness, and their inquietudes to others, are buried all in everlasting gloom. The pleasant remembrance of their gayest

hours is either extinguished, or swallowed up in sorrow for their sin: and the prospect before them, —O what can this be, but a complication of all that is dreadful, unavoidable, and eternal!

This cool and serious review of worldly things and affairs passes so often upon my heart, and seems so necessary in reminding me how much I am but a stranger and sojourner here, that, if I have dwelt a little the more upon the vain wickedness of earth and time, the reader will know the reason in me, if he feel no occasion to apply it to himself.

One cannot take up an annual calendar of names, published only twenty or thirty years ago, without almost considering one's-self among the tombs. The gay courtier and the plotting statesman, who once figured away within the senate or about the throne, now lie in undistinguishable ruin with the beggar and the clown; not less vile than these, and perhaps not less regarded or forgotten than the lowest of the low.

And what shall preserve, from the like disaster, all the present system of cares and pleasures? If, indeed, that can be called a system, which begins in evil, is carried on with disorder, and ends in folly or nothing.

O! but, says one, "I have much goods laid up for many years; and I will say to my soul, Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." One of this sort, not worthy to be named, is put down in God's record for an everlasting fool. In the same night his soul was required of him, and had something else to think of than to attend the absurd

business which only the body could do, of eating, drinking, and being merry in the abuse of temporal good.

In the midst of all this perishing and disordered state, there is one rich blessing which never can fail. The mercy of Jehovah in Christ Jesus endureth, yea, endureth for ever. This is often repeated by the Lord himself, that it might be constantly and cheerfully believed.

O my soul ! thy time faileth, thy body is decaying, the world is daily changing, and nothing about thee continueth in one stay. Blessed be God, to thee likewise a change shall soon come, and come for the better in the midst of it all ! Whatever alterations appear, thou hast an unalterable God, and an unperishing home before thee. If the earth fall into destruction, as soon it will, thy estate cannot be lost; for thou art only a pilgrim and traveller here, and thy inheritance is above, out of the reach of ruin. Thy interest being safe in Christ, all is safe that is worth saving, with respect to thee. Thou canst only pass from death into life, from sin to holiness, from pain to peace, from earth to heaven, from mortals to God.

O how then should I rejoice in thee, my Saviour, and my Lord ! In thee, who makest all things mine; all, either as good, or to lead me to good. I adore thee, that thou thus disposest the world, life, death, things present, or things to come, in my behalf, calling them mine, making them really mine, because they contribute to my welfare. Above all, I bless thee for the end. I am lost in love and ad-

miration, when thou tellest me that I am thine, O my Redeemer, even as thou art God's !

What manner of love is this, that I, a mutable worm, should become an immutable spirit ; that I, who live in a tottering house of clay, amidst a people of unclean lips, should be raised to a mansion of glory among the innumerable company of saints and angels ; that I, a dull inhabitant of a miserable world, ruined and ravaged by sin and time, should be translated to a joyful rest, unchanging as eternity ; that I, who was once a slave to Satan, and deserve only to live with him, should be made and kept a child of God, yea, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ Jesus, of a kingdom which cannot be shaken ! O what manner of love is this indeed !

CHAPTER XVIII.

On the patient enduring of Wrongs.

LIKE the blessed Psalmist, I have sometimes been rewarded evil for good, to the great discomfort of my soul. It seems trying to flesh and blood, that is, to my animal and corrupt passions, to bear all, and to say nothing. But yet this is generally my wisdom and my duty.

It is my wisdom, because then I do not stir up further evil or strife in my own bosom, or in others ; and I moreover engage my gracious Master to undertake for me, by committing all in silent patience

to him, who hath engaged to make every thing, and such things as these most certainly among the rest, work together for my good. Thus that, which appears to be only a natural evil, will, by his superior management and control, be turned into a spiritual blessing.

It is also my duty to suffer patiently, considering him who endured the most severe contradiction of sinners against himself; because thereby I prove that I belong to him; for which purpose, perhaps, trials of this kind may have been permitted to fall upon me. If I have right and truth on my side, it is not only faithless, but also unreasonable, to be impatient. I ought rather to be thankful in that behalf, and to ask mercy and grace for those who slander me against all equity, and without a cause. It is indeed unpleasant to have the treatment which he experienced, who said, "I became a reproach among all my neighbours; and they of mine acquaintance were afraid of me; and they that did see me without, conveyed themselves from me." But this may be God's physic to my soul, which is not given me for my pleasure, but as the means, though painful means, of future good. My worldly attachments, or my Christian attachments in a worldly way, may be growing stronger than are for the true health of my soul: and, therefore, this is a call to live more inwardly upon grace, and to wait in faith and prayer for more communion with God. When I gain his company, by losing the company or the friendship of men, and even of good men with great corruptions like my own, I have no reason to lament any loss,

but to be thankful with all humility, for the kindness of every providence which leads me nearer, and keeps me closer to my blessed Lord. He is a tried, and sure friend indeed, a friend for eternity.

If I took another sort of conduct, and exposed those as I might, and, perhaps, as they justly may deserve, who have done me evil for good, I should indulge only that base revenge of my fallen nature, which would plunge me as deep another way in the corruption of which I may have right to complain. I may and ought to use the caution of keeping out of the way of injury; but I must not revenge it either by word or deed. While I am only wronged, I am safe; but I am open to all manner of evil, when guilty of wrong.

Above all the harm that can be done me by creatures, let me tremble at my own passions, which, like tinder, are ready to kindle by the smallest spark of mental fire. May I tremble too at the officious readiness of others to increase my inflammation by their own. And alas! how much more ready is corrupt nature to feel and to foment discord, than to subdue and abhor it! Let me pray then to be delivered from the strife of other men's tongues; and to have a strong restraint, for such I greatly need, upon mine. Sin "is the great kill-friend," as one calls it; may I therefore beg to be guarded against sin, both in myself and in them!

O Lord, what a nature, and what a world, do I live in! I groan under a nature which is ready to meet all the evils and confusions that are in the world, and to make every one of them my own.

How doth the unquiet spirit of man plunge himself, and all about him, into confusion, miseries, and distresses; engendering unhappy discords among individuals, and bloody cruel wars among the nations! And how often, my blessed Master, instead of retiring to thy bosom, have I myself allowed this spirit of violence within me, and met it in other men! How much have I wronged my enemies by not praying for them, as I ought, when they have vented their wrongs against me! With how little patience and submission to thy will have I endured these wrongs; not considering, that they could not have come, unless they had been permitted by thee, and were allowed to come altogether for my good! O Lord, wipe off my guilt by thy most precious blood, and enable me in future, as well not to take offence, as to be earnest to give none. So shall I appear indeed to be the disciple of thee, my Saviour, who, like a patient silent lamb, didst endure all manner of insults and injuries; and so, in following thee, I shall find peace at least by thy grace, both in thy bosom and in my own, though I find none beside throughout this distracted world!

CHAPTER XIX.

On Prayer.

PRAYER is the very breath of faith, and the first evidence of new and spiritual life in the soul. The

Lord said of Paul, "Behold he prayeth;" because the Lord had then given him a heart to pray. Doubtless, he had often fasted and prayed before, as far as the lips were concerned: but the spirit, not words; life, not expression only, constitute prayer with God. Language may give it a form; but language alone is like mere body without a soul; and he that so offers it, renders to God a dead unclean carcass for a living sacrifice, which is an abomination in his sight.

Whatever hath life, must breathe; and if the life be sound and strong it will breathe freely. Short, irregular, disordered breath, discovers either great exercise, or ill health. It is the same in the life of faith. If the soul be quickened by Christ, it will breathe out its desires after him; perhaps, like a child at first, mingled with strong crying, bitter sobs, and many tears; but still it breathes on and prays on; its breath of prayer is not stopped, but struggles for life and increase. If the prayer be faint and weak, disordered and low, the person is not in full life and health, or else some great temptation oppresses him heavily. The Physician of souls must be looked to for medicine, and for deliverance. Certainly all is not right; and a speedy help should be sought for and applied.

When the mind is truly touched by grace, it will and must pray. If the heart cannot find words to carry up its request, it will send them forth in earnest groans. Prayer can no more be kept from ascending than flame from the fire. "The Spirit," said one, who understood this matter well, "helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should

pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The cries of a drowning man are above the formality of words, and forcibly pierce the ear for help: so the deep-felt anguish of a convinced heart is inexpressibly eager for mercy, and with moans and groans sues it out from God in right earnest. It doth not seek a florid oration, or theatrical starts, but pours forth aspirations, at times, too ardent and mighty for words. O how God loveth such addresses as these! One "Abba, Father," one tearful sigh, one inward groan, are beyond, and far better, than all the fine speeches in the world.

Let not the broken-hearted sinner grieve then too much, that he cannot find language to express the fulness of his desires. His desires are the better for being found in his bosom too large and too strong for utterance: there is more of heaven in them, and they will break out at last the swifter towards heaven. If he can find fit words, let him use them; if he cannot, let not their absence increase his concern. God knows and loves the language of the heart, and in due time will answer the prayer. See 1 Sam. i. 13—15.

As to the gift of wordy prayer, it is generally bestowed for the sake of others. If accompanied with faith, it is highly valuable for godly edifying; if not, it will rather weary than improve. This gift is stirred up to more usefulness by exercise; and, when expressions flow easily, the heart can freely open itself without over-much labour or fear.

As to public ministrations of prayer, the unhappy

zeal of party renders it difficult to speak of them without danger of offence. However, this every candid Christian may venture to allow, that a form of sound words may more decently be used for congregations, than the loose, crude, and incoherent expressions of raw and unexperienced men. On the other hand, could the church be always sure of sound and able ministers, who might rightly pray over the word of truth, as well as divide it, there certainly would be less occasion for forms, which seem to have been composed to prevent disorders, or keep out heresies, or to show to the church at large, what should be the objects of prayer at all times. No one surely can deny, that, in both the Jewish and Christian church, where public forms have been used, men have prayed together with the Spirit, and perhaps with the more understanding and communion because they knew the words, and that it is possible to do so now with any sound and gracious form. So, on the other hand, it would be bigoted and unchristian-like to affirm, that the Spirit of grace hath not blessed what is called free prayer to the edification of souls; when, doubtless, there are now living numberless witnesses, of great truth and piety, to the contrary. It never was the form, or the want of it, that made true prayer; but the grace of God in Christ Jesus, flowing through the words that were used, from or to the heart. And if all these gracious persons, divesting themselves of narrow prejudices, were asked, How and by what means they prayed? they would probably answer to a man, that it was by faith in Christ Jesus, and by the good

Spirit of their God. If both sides, then, are thus in debt to grace for the very life and being of all their prayers, and are thus alike free to confess it; how should the kind meekness and forbearance of their dear Lord glow in all their hearts towards each other, and cause them to love one another gladly, because he hath made no difference in his love to them? Surely, this would be much better than to wrangle about a mode or no mode of prayer, in either of which, just as God blesses, there may be much true prayer or no prayer at all. It is the spirit of faith which carries on the real business; not the form or the gesture, the lip or the tongue.

Having ventured thus far to walk upon ground, which party or prejudice have made very tender, it may be expedient for my soul to consider the subject of prayer in a view more interesting and necessary to its welfare.

My Saviour commands me to watch, as well as to pray; and his apostle exhorts me to "be sober and watch unto prayer." My flesh is prone to be intoxicated with the mystic cup of Babylon, with the love of this present evil world, and therefore is unruly and unsteady. From hence arise all my dullness and distractions of mind in the things of God; my coldness and weariness in prayer, my feebleness in duties, and my faintness in praise. I had need to be sober, for I have a great concern before me; I ought to watch, for my enemies are subtle and mighty. They watch, if I do not, and are always ready to take advantages to hinder, whenever I am careless to get forward. I have an open door, and

many adversaries. If I do not watch unto prayer, the world will get between me and my duty: if I do not watch in prayer, Satan will do his utmost to prevent my sweet or continued approach unto God: if I do not watch after prayer, pride, presumption, security, or negligence, will find a way into my heart. O Lord, if I were fully and constantly aware of my true situation, how could I think to do less than always to pray and not to faint!

My fallen heart is ever ready to take up with the mere performance of duty. How often have I prayed for spiritual mercies; and not considered afterwards whether God hath granted them or not? For increase of faith, wisdom, holiness, and other graces, I have asked with earnestness at the time, and then soon have forgotten what I asked for, or neglected to mark the event. Hence all the lowness of my attainments in divine things, and my overborne subjection to things earthly. And when I have requested temporal blessings, how little have I considered the hand of God in granting, or the wisdom of God in refusing them! How often have I sought the good for its own sake, instead of seeking it for God's glory and my spiritual welfare, and thereby was ready to turn it, if granted, into an evil! How little use have I made of temporal benefits, when they have been given me, and sometimes given unexpectedly too, that I might notice God's providence; and how ready hath my corrupt nature been to take and apply them all to itself! Surely I am as much the monument of God's patience as of his love.

It is a matter always to be had in remembrance,

that prayer should be followed up with thanksgiving. I ought to be thankful, if what I have prayed for is received; and I should be thankful also, if what I have prayed for is restrained. God is better to me than I am to myself; and he only keeps back any thing from his children, either because it is not good at all, or not good in the time and for the purpose for which they desired it. The words of a very ancient poet, rightly turned, may express, in this case, the sentiment of every Christian :

The good we need, great King, bestow,
Whether we ask for it or no ;
But, if for ill we blindly cry,
In mercy, Lord, that suit deny.

The practice of many saints under the Old Testament was to pray thrice in a day. According to opportunity, I cannot pray too often, either in the closet, the family, or the church. There are indeed stated times for these; but one kind of prayers may be used at all times, and in every circumstance of life. The prayers of ejaculation, or of darting up the heart towards God (like that in Nehem. ii. 4.) in short and pathetic sentences, have a wonderful effect in them, and tend very much to keep up the soul's communion with God, and the life of holiness in common things. Many such may be taken from the Psalms in particular. They show a sweet and healthful inclination of the soul, more perhaps than laboured expressions, or long continuance of address, which may sometimes fall into idle repetitions, or be unattended with suitable affections and fervency. O how delightfully will these aspirations often pass to-

wards heaven from the soul ! How warmly stir up the affections, and raise the mind ! How strongly check the inordinate care of earthly things !

“ Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my Strength, and my Redeemer !”

CHAPTER XX.

On singing Praises to God.

THE first of all earthly singers gave this as an inspired rule, “ Sing ye praises with understanding.” Without spiritual understanding, we can only make a noise. Unless we know how deeply we are indebted to God, and have the sweet sense of his goodness in our souls, we may please ourselves with a tune, but we yield no music to him. Some of old “ chanted to the sound of the viol, and invented to themselves instruments of music ;” but, at the same time, they were among those who were at ease in Zion, and who put far away the evil day, to whom woe is denounced. God never instituted varieties of music in his service, however, like other carnal ordinances, he might bear with it under the Jewish economy ; but only trumpets and rams’ horns, to usher in the seasons and solemnities. It is spiritual harmony which is the delight of heaven, and not outward jingle and sound ; and therefore, if we are not spiritual, we can have no true notion of this delight,

nor "make melody in our hearts to the Lord." The thrills of music, and the divine joys of the soul, are very different things. Worldly men have had the first, and thought them from heaven; but they continued no longer than the sound; while the peace of gracious praise is full, sublime, and abiding. We must indeed be real Christians before any of us can say with the Apostle, "I will pray with the SPIRIT, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the SPIRIT, and I will sing with the understanding also."

I cannot but shake my head, when I hear an officer of the church calling upon the people, "to sing to the praise and glory of God;" and immediately half a dozen merry men, in a high place, shall take up the matter, and most loudly chant it away to the praise and glory of themselves. The tune, perhaps, shall be too difficult for the greater part of the congregation, who have no leisure for crotchets and quavers; and so the most delightful of all public worship shall be wrested from them, and the praises of God taken out of their mouths. It is no matter whence this custom arose; in itself it is neither holy, decent, nor useful; and therefore ought to be banished entirely from the churches of God.

When Christians sing all together in some easy tune, accommodated to the words of their praise, and not likely to take off their attention from sense to sound; then, experience shows, they sing most lustily, (as the Psalmist expresses it,) and with the best good courage. The symphony of voice and

the sympathy of heart may flow through the whole congregation, which is the finest music to truly serious persons, and the most acceptable to God of any in the world. To "sing with grace in their hearts to the Lord," is the melody of heaven itself; and often brings a foretaste of heaven to the redeemed even here. But jingle, piping, sound, and singing, without this divine accompaniment, are grating, discordant, jarring harshness with God, and vapid lifeless insipidity to the souls of his people.

I am no enemy to music as a human art; but let all things be in their place. The pleasures of the ear are not the gracious acts of God's Spirit in the soul; but the effect of vibrated matter from an outward sense. This may be indulged as perhaps an innocent and ingenious amusement; but what have our amusements to do with solemn and sacred adorations of God? Would not this be carnal, and after the modes of the world, and not after Christ? Surely no believer will venture to call any thing spiritual, which doth not proceed from, or accord with, the Spirit of life, or tend to "mortify the old man with his affections and lusts."

Neither sounds of air, nor words of sense alone, however excellent, can please God. "He is a Spirit, and they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth;" for such He seeketh. It is easy to do many, if not all, religious acts with a very carnal heart; but to be truly religious, or to walk and act in our spirits with God,—this hath always been too hard "for flesh and blood," and can only be performed by that grace which giveth life and power to every renewed mind.

Lord, help me, I beseech thee, thus to laud and adore thee! Give me a lively sense of thy mercy to my soul; and then my soul shall offer up her gracious returns of lively praise. Sacrifice and burnt-offering thou requirest not, for no outward thing, even of thine own appointment, when not inwardly understood, can please thee; the music of my voice, without the incense or breathings of my soul, thou wilt not accept. O assist me, then, to praise thee aright; for, without thee, I can do nothing. Thou alone givest occasion to praise; and thou also givest the Spirit of praise to use the occasion. Vouchsafe both unto me. Then shall I one day join the great "assembly of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven," and sing, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, that ever-new song, "Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb! Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever. Amen."

CHAPTER XXI.

A Christian in losing his Life saves it.

CHRIST hath said, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

In doing this the Christian must die daily. He is crucified with Christ in the flesh, that he may live with Christ in the Spirit. His mortal body is brought into subjection to the rule of grace; and grace mortifies that body, by crucifying its affections and lusts.

These words are easy and plain; but, alas! how few do know them! To die to SELF is the most painful thing to flesh and blood that can be. To be stripped of all conceited worth, to renounce a man's own righteousness as well as his sins, to give up in earnest his own will and way, to live in an emptied frame of mind simply upon Christ for strength, wisdom, grace, and salvation, to desire nothing but what may please him, to be contented with the trials he sends because they are his, to have a heart carried above the world, not to fear man against God; to bear, to believe, to hope, to endure all things as the best, and to maintain a firm view of eternal glory; all this is losing a man's own carnal life, and saving the life of his soul in Christ Jesus. The Christian who hath this in him may say with the Apostle, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

At first sight, this kind of life appears gloomy and dreadful; but when once truly tasted, it is sweet and pleasant to the soul. It grows less difficult and painful, as the carnal life is more and more subdued. The life of the flesh can only indulge

some poor, base, and vexatious gratifications in earthly and perishing things; but the renewed life of the Spirit consists in righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost, which cannot be lost, and which never can cloy. The enjoyment of this renders the Christian, in proportion to his enjoyment, a steady man, unshaken or unsubdued by the disorders and distresses of the world, and cleaving the faster to God when they come. A worldly man is often terrified to his wit's end, or to death, where a real Christian can be calm and resigned. He hath learned the value of all life in Christ; and he knows that what is really worth his anxiety can never be lost. In throwing all upon God, he finds the fears and terrors of his weak and corrupt flesh abated; and he gains strength and liveliness in his soul. The Captain of his salvation gives him a tranquillity of courage, which the bravest human heart cannot put on. Women of delicate tenderness, by this gracious gift, have frequently met the king of terrors himself, with a soberness of triumph, unknown to mortal heroes.

These mortal heroes, indeed, may have ventured upon death, despising life and all its enjoyments; but all the while were evidently concerned for their vain glory, and the useless perpetuity of a name. The peculiar distinction of the Christian hero is, that he not only can meet death as a vanquished foe, but also can look down upon the infamy of the world with a noble scorn, valuing it, and all mere reputation among worms, as trifling pageantry or idle pride. He can live and die in secret, which none

of these ostentatious mortals can either endure or dare to do.

No man can live truly by his own power, but only by power from on high. The Christian, therefore, is daily looking unto Jesus, his head of life, for the maintenance and support of every grace. If Christ withdraw his hand, he must fall; for, in himself, the strongest, the wisest, the holiest Christian, is confusion and wickedness, weakness and nothing. He feels himself void of all good, and flies to Jesus, therefore, to obtain it. When he doth not enjoy his Saviour, he cannot enjoy himself. But when he hath him, he hath more than all things; because he hath him who made and possesses them all.

They who are great, and love to be great, in outward things, have commonly but little of this essential life within them. When the soul hath no feast within, it gads abroad for delight, and will put up with mean and carnal trash, unsuitable to its proper nature, rather than have nothing. Outward pomp and carnal show, even in religion, commonly proclaim an inward emptiness and want.

There is a carnal knowledge of spiritual things, which the Apostle calls a "knowing Christ after the flesh," and which is very different from the divine knowledge of those things. The Apostles appear to have had chiefly, if not only, the former, till the day of Pentecost, when they fully "received power from on high." They indeed loved Christ, and sincerely followed him before; but their love and knowledge of the Saviour had in it a large mixture of flesh and corruption. Hence, they were aston-

ished to hear of his sufferings and death, and their own humiliation; when, it is plain enough, they expected great temporal advancement and honour for themselves, and a glorious temporal kingdom for him. Even after his resurrection, like the Jews at large, they thought of a "kingdom to be restored unto Israel:" but, when the true kingdom came into their hearts, we hear no more of these carnal expectations, but of a joyful readiness to suffer persecution and death for their Lord, and to go somewhere else, instead of this world, fully to enjoy him.

So, among us called Christians, there is this carnal knowledge of Christ, consisting in outward profession and a natural understanding of the truths of the gospel, which is also mixed sometimes with degrees of grace and spiritual life. But persons in this state are much in outward things, are great outwardly, talk of religion outwardly, and of its great advancement by great human helps in the world. They are strong in their animal passions, carry these into religious matters, make a vast noise and agitation among men, are great rulers if possible, seek to carry all church affairs in their own way, and in short, are never easy out of a bustle, and certainly never easy in it. When these people sink into themselves by getting more true life in Christ, they are found to be more and more mild, humble, patient, gentle, "not obtruding themselves into things which they have not seen, nor vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind." Then Christ is all in all to them; and they themselves nothing at all. Then it is that they lose their own lives, and find them again with great interest and sweetness in Christ.

If the love and word of Christ “dwell in us richly in all wisdom,” we shall desire to be much with Christ in our spirits, and to shut out all possible interruptions and hinderances in our communion with him. This is our great happiness, and the true life of God in the soul of man.

CHAPTER XXII.

On the Opinion of Carnal Men.

THE judgment which natural men form of spiritual life, is altogether wild and extravagant, gross and injurious. “The things of God himself are foolishness unto them, neither can they know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” And can those think rightly of the people of God, who have not the faculties to think rightly of the things which render them distinct from other men, and which are the very grounds and principles of God’s conduct towards them? And ought a Christian to be moved exceedingly at the judgment of ignorance and error?

This world’s opinion of all divine things is indeed very foolish and vain. It condemns what it hath not seen, and despises what it doth not know. It laughs at the wisdom of God, which it is too weak to apprehend, and sets up its own mutable reason, which is but folly, in its stead. A few years shall lay it low; and the wisest of the worldly-wise will be the first to

condemn themselves for the madmen and the fools.
Wisd. v. 4.

Be satisfied, then, fellow-christian, with the just judgment of God. Thou canst not be more despised than thy Saviour was. He indeed deserved no scorn, but thou much more than thou canst have. If they called the Master of the house "Beelzebub," shall those, who are of the household, think to escape a hard name?—No; let them bear it for his sake: it will never disgrace them in heaven.

CHAPTER XXIII.

On the Esteem of Good Men.

THOUGH a nice sense of honour, consistent with his profession, becomes a Christian; yet, an over-nice care to get honour from any man is neither the duty nor practice of the Christian life.

Be not too anxious, my brother, for the good opinion even of the best of men, nor altogether judge of thy state by so uncertain a rule. Concern of this kind seems to argue a too fond regard of thy carnal self, or of thy own state in the world. If they show disrespect, and if it arise from mistake; rejoice that thy true hidden life depends not on the opinion of mortals, but on the love and just judgment of an unerring Redeemer. The opinion of others can neither make nor unmake thee, as a Christian. But if their disesteem be founded in truth, fear not to dive to

the bottom of thine own undeservings, and cease not to pray for grace to correct them. Be not offended with thy brethren in either case; for this will lead to ruptures, neither for their profit nor thine. The glory of God and of his truth is also concerned, which should fill thee with the greater forbearance and caution in all thy dealings with "the household of faith." Pray for wisdom to examine thy cause faithfully, and to know the worst that can be found of thyself, and to see into the truth or mistake of others. And if, in thine own conscience, the right be with thee, be thankful for the mercy, and cease not, because they need it, to pray for them who are in the wrong. Thy true charity should relieve, in this way, their spiritual necessity, and so rise, with that lawful triumph of a Christian, by a holy and inward superiority of meekness and of truth.

Beware of anger and offence. The wrath of man cannot work the righteousness of God. Be humbled by every disesteem, whether just or unjust, within thyself. This is gaining a step in the great inward and spiritual progress of self-renunciation; for which end, these means, though unpleasant to proud nature, may have been mercifully and providentially ordained.

Fear not to see the worst of thine own infirmities: tremble rather, lest they should be hidden from thee. When thou art made truly low in thine own eyes, the slights and contempts even of good men, proceeding, as they usually do, not from grace but common infirmities, will not over-much vex thee. It is the fondness of self, and the pride of our hearts, which render all outward insult and injury distressing

and painful. He that thinks little of himself, can bear to be thought little of by others: but he that is lifted up within, is grieved when he cannot find that tribute of respect which his own foolish fondness hath ordained for himself.

The best remedy for spiritual disorder is spiritual prayer. Corruption inflicts or feels pain; and grace should subdue corruption. It is the true wisdom of a Christian to set his faith, and not the passions of his unholy nature, at work upon evil. Grace will teach him not to huff, or snort, or resent, or speak great swelling words of carnal indignation; but to bear and forbear, and pray, and wait, and entreat according to the occasion. When the rough north wind of trial rages and raves, then the graces of the Christian should more abundantly flow. All this is difficult, without a doubt; but will not a gracious success be afterwards a comfort to the believer, both as it affords a real proof of the true life of Christ within him, and an occasion of glorifying God before men? And if it answer these ends, how great is his reason to be thankful!

When gracious men see all this work upon thee, they will honour God in his own gifts: but, if they do not, it is in no man's power to alter thy condition with him. Be deeply thankful that thou hast found mercy; and show forbearance to those who need it from thee.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Weakness is Impatient.

It is not strength, but weakness, which complains. He that is strong, can well bear the infirmities of the weak : he that is weak cannot bear at all, but is overwhelmed with his own. A father in Christ can put up with the frowardness and indiscretion of the babe in Christ ; but the latter, having his mind but little exercised, is full of dislikes, and always wants his own will and way : otherwise, he complains.

This weakness is commonly captious ; fonder of finding errors than healing them, and more able to discover the grounds of difference than wisely to take up the points of unity. Sincere, yet quarrelsome ; troubled, yet headstrong ; young in the faith, yet presuming ; fond of parties and persons, of modes and of forms of doctrine, with warm heart and little experience ; all this is the character of most young or weak professors. When they grow older in grace, they become wiser in the kingdom, more catholic, patient, forbearing, candid, and forgiving. They see a thousand mistakes and wilfulness in their own first profession ; and these incline them, through an increase of wisdom and strength, to suffer kindly the infirmities and frailties of others. They then love what is real, encourage what is weak, pardon what is childish, endure what is troublesome, correct what is evil, and pray, not save, when they see but slow improvements.

not for self; in the spirit of religion, and not of laziness; to be more quickened for heaven, and not to be more useless upon earth. Hence it will be seen, that all Christians are neither called to, nor fit for, an entire seclusion from the world: their habits, dispositions, abilities, and occupations of life, render it improper for them.

When a Christian can fill up all his retirement with the things of God, and for his glory, with no just demand upon him from secular affairs, it is certainly a most high and desirable privilege. Such a one may and ought to further himself in knowledge, and devote all he knows, through grace, to the glory of God, and the edification of men. Leisure is abused when employed in tattle and dissipation, as it often is; and the abuser had much better be engaged in some active calling and employment.

To retire indeed unto God, is the most severe and solemn business in the world. It is a sort of middle state between heaven and earth, which no carnal mind can either understand or love. The froth and levity of the flesh must be subdued, else all the retirement will end in vanity. Humble and ardent prayer should begin the day, the study or the exercise of gracious things should carry it on; some intervals must be found for supplications and praise; strict watchfulness and trials must be continually made upon the heart; and growing meetness for death and heaven must appear in the life, and no rest be taken at night, but after humble prayer and surrender of all into the hands of God, for time and eternity. A true retired Christian is more careful

of his time than any other man, because he can spend it more preciously. He thinks it a sad loss to throw away hours, which might have been employed in the works or word of God.

When the truly retired Christian is alone, he is, as one says, "never less alone;" for God is with him, and in him of a truth. He not only goeth into his study or his closet, but gets within himself, into the closet of his heart, and watches all the motions of nature and grace. Thus in time he becomes truly learned in that most difficult subject—his own self.

When we talk much with others, it is hardly possible, in a nature so fallen and corrupt as ours, not to talk amiss. But when we commune with God, he speaketh so with us, as to give an increase of wisdom and grace, with much solid refreshment of mind. His word and will, become plain and familiar to our souls; we enter into the spirit of his ways; and our spirits feel many undoubted proofs, both of their own immortality, and of the great blessedness of approaching glory. This, wherever it abounds, deadens the affection of a Christian to the low and vain discourse of the world; renders him more happy in, and fit for, his retirement, and enlivens his hopes for God and heaven. What improvement thus to live! What blessedness thus to die!

Many retire, that they may see and hear more of the world, and be entertained with its novelties or news: but the believer would withdraw to dive more fully into himself, as into a subject deep and little known, and to be more acquainted with his Re-

deemer in all the wonders and manifestations of his grace. It is a day lost indeed, when he obtains no prospect of heaven, or hath made no steps towards it.

If a man doth not thus retire, he only opens a wide door to all sorts of temptations to rush in upon him. So very few are fitted for, or called to this kind of leisure, (though by abuse only it becomes leisure,) that God, in his wisdom, hath appointed so much corporeal employment in the world, even for his own children. As the earth would be more an *Aceldama*, or field of blood, than it is, but for necessary labours, which call away, in some respect or other, almost all men; so the church itself would be more defiled, and individuals more unholy, than they are already, if manual or active duties did not take up the greatest part of their time.

I have known many professors, and some of an order too, which should have engaged them entirely in things divine, who have wasted, in frivolous discourses, mean pursuits, idle engagements, and other sad dissipations, large portions of that time which should have been devoted to studious improvement, serious conversation, or active piety. Vessels thus ever running out, how and when can they be filled? And what have they for others, who lay up so little for themselves?

O Lord, help me to retire indeed, but yet chiefly for thee, and for greater communion with thee! When I find thee not in my heart, it is hard and darkened: when thou art not in my closet, it is either full of confusion as a market, or it is desert

as a wilderness. I can get nothing; and I soon feel that I am nothing, but an empty, unprofitable void. O cheer thy poor servant with thy presence, who would indeed be a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth; yea, if it be thy will, a stranger to every thing but thee; having my heart in thy home, and my soul, in every respect, under thy command. Lord, thus help me to withdraw from the world, only to draw nearer, both in spirit and in truth, unto thyself, and to whatever relates to thy glory!

CHAPTER XXVI.

On the Fear of Man.

HE that unduly fears man, cannot truly fear God: and he that lives much in the fear of God, will not regard over-much what man can do unto him. The want of faith is the root of all carnal fear, which becomes less and less, as faith gathers strength and increases in the soul. It is a sad hinderance in the ways of God, as well as torment, to live under the views, opinions, prejudices, and passions of worldly men.

“The fear of man bringeth a snare;” and a snare for all sorts of evils. Mild, gentle, feeling, and delicate tempers, are most exposed to this danger; and they should pray much to him who strengtheneth the weak, for fortitude without rudeness, for resolution without roughness, and for stability without

stubbornness, that so they may properly act and hold out in the time of trial.

When it is a principle graciously established in the soul, that men can do nothing to us but which is for our good, and that they must do whatever is ; it greatly abates that fickle feebleness of nature, which, out of too much love and care for itself, brings us into bondage of heart to wretched worms, " whose breath is in their nostrils," and themselves, in this way, " not to be accounted of."



CHAPTER XXVII.

On my own Imperfections.

WHILE I am in the flesh, I must be encompassed with many infirmities ; and while I am in the world, I cannot escape trial and temptation. These things are grievous to my spirit ; but I see that they are permitted to wean me from myself, and to draw off my heart from the creatures to my only true refuge in God.

What feebleness, at times, do I not feel in duty ; what fickleness and unsteadiness in following my Redeemer ; what dulness and distraction in prayer ; so that I can hardly remain firm and lively long together, in the pursuit of that good which my soul most desires and approves. It is a war indeed in my members to get my corrupted nature down, and to have the life of grace warm and vigorous within

me. I cannot but groan, at times, in this tabernacle, being burdened, and almost oppressed, by the evils within and about me.

Were it not for divine help, O what should I do? Like Peter on the sea, I have sometimes ventured boldly after my Lord; but like him too, through faintness of heart and weakness of faith, at other times, I have cried out, "Lord, save, or I perish!" Thou hast helped me indeed, blessed be thy name, O my God! and yet I cannot but reproach myself for the cold forgetfulness and weakness of my spirit, in doubting so often of thy faithfulness, and in not keeping hold of thy promises.

Thus, Lord, I feel myself a poor, a frail, and altogether a weak and worthless man; fit for nothing but thy mercy, and capable of nothing, when left to my own nature, but rebellion against it. When I survey myself, and all my confused and ruined faculties, I am filled with shame, and cannot but wonder at thy long-suffering towards me. O wretch that I am, in what a vile body of sin do I live! How am I always struggling against thee with my perverse and wicked flesh, contrary to the true and lasting interests of my soul! How ready to yield to thine enemy and mine; or to give up all for lost, rather than maintain the hard and painful struggle with corruption and sin!

When I have been lively and zealous for my God, how often have I been ready to overlook, to misapply, or to turn his grace to the foolish vanity of my own mind! Insomuch, at times, I seem all flesh to myself, and to have neither true light, life, wis-

dom, nor strength from above within me. My failures are and have been so numerous, the apostacy of my heart so great, the conduct of my life and temper so mutable and irregular, and all my frame so poor and wavering, so cold and weak in embracing the best things, that I am ready to bemoan with the prophet, "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips! My whole head is sick, and my whole heart is faint."

Others may talk of their wills and their powers, their duties and their deserts; but, as for me, I can scarce lift up my eyes to heaven when I consider myself: rather with the publican, my brother, I must smite upon my breast and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Instead of looking on myself as a fine holy creature, who can appear confidently before my God, I shrink with contrition and shame at the thought, that I have done little else than dishonour him all my days, and deserve nothing for the best thing I was ever able to do, but confusion and sorrow.

O what a plague is discovered in a man's own heart, when he knows himself; and how little doth he appear in his own eyes, when he hath been made to view, in some true light and degree, the piercing purity and perfections of God!

And yet, O marvellous to say, God is pleased, by all the weak and contrary things in me, to magnify his own power and glory! By these he makes me out of humour with myself; by these he drives me from a thousand refuges of lies; by these he compels me to cleave unto him, as my only Rock,

Succour, and Remedy. In this way, I can feel, as well as read, what the Apostle meant, where he says, "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"—"for when I am weak, then I am strong." These are strange paradoxes to the natural heart; but blessed is the man who can truly understand, and enter into their sweet sense and experience.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Believer receives Food, as well as Light, in the Word and Doctrine of Christ.

THE mere notion of divine things, without their power, cannot profit the soul. As a man may be poor with the plan of a large estate, of which he hath no possession; so a professor of Christianity may have the Bible before him, and may be able to raise very high and fine speculations from it, and yet have no true knowledge or enjoyment of the truths which it contains.

A minister may preach of these truths with great clearness, great readiness, and great noise; and yet have no true savour, no solid experience, and no real communion, of the truths themselves within him. What proves this is, that he is not the same man in the pulpit and in the world. The doctrines of the Gospel will serve for orations as well as other topics; nay, will serve for the finest orations, be-

cause there is more of sublimity and truth in them than in any other.

An author likewise may write about divine revelation, and all the mysteries of redemption, with precision, accuracy, force, and elegance, and yet be destitute of the main concern, which is the faith and inward perception of these things for his own soul. I would deal fairly and closely with my own self in this respect, as well as with others; and I will own, that my light is far beyond my liveliness; and though I humbly trust that I have some little real life in my knowledge of God and his truths, yet I confess, with an aching heart, that it is indeed but little, too little, and much less than my own fondness for myself, or vanity, or pride, or conceit, (for, Lord, thou knowest, and I know, that I have all these in abundance within me!) will suffer me at times to think that I have. Perceiving then my own weakness, and the deceivableness of unrighteousness in my own heart, I am able to see, and yet to pity and bear with, the same infirmities and defects in others.

However, no real believer can find much or long satisfaction in any notions or conceptions of divine truth, though very sublime, clear, full, extensive, and convincing, without something more in them than from them. He doth not despise head-knowledge indeed, because by this he can see the wisdom of God; but he would have heart-knowledge too, because he wishes to taste, to enjoy, to be assured of his interest in the love of God. He can no

more feed upon words and syllables, in his soul, than he can live upon air only for his body.

The Lord, therefore, when he imparts the demonstration of the Spirit to a man, imparts it "not in word but in power:" and so the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." He cannot receive it aright without this power; he cannot live upon it but by this power; nor hold out in living and believing to the end but by the same power.

This gracious feeding of the soul upon the things of God is its greatest enjoyment here upon earth, and one of its bright evidences for heaven. It is a secret holy act, carried on best without the clutter of the animal passions, or the intercourse of corporeal things. The holy bread was eaten in the holy place, before the holy light; and all out of the air, or view, or correspondence of the world.—Thus, in the secret place of the Most High, the soul feeds upon Christ, beholds Christ, and obtains all its divine communion with the things of God. And when it hath thus tasted that the Lord is gracious, it loves to be with him, and says earnestly, as Peter did, "It is good to be here." The carnal notion even of the best things will no longer satisfy or feed it. The bread of God which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the hungry soul, can alone satiate its cravings, and completely answer its desires.

CHAPTER XXIX.

On the Spirit of Scoffing.

IT is no less ungracious than unwise to indulge a scoffing temper in our souls. Pride and an unmortified opinion of self, joined with contempt of others, are the true origin of this evil. It is the more dangerous, and not so much to the scorned as to the scorning, when set off with wit and mimicry, point and satire. But attic salt is not the salt of the covenant; and, in sacred things especially, is not to be used by a Christian.

It may be diverting to mimic and to *take off* others, in order to expose their foibles or defects; but how and to whom is it diverting? Is it to the humble, spiritual, and mortified mind? No, but to the profane and the carnal; or, at least, to what is carnal and profane in a Christian, which is the very principle of all others that he would not strengthen or encourage, but subdue.

There is so much inhumanity, as well as irreligion, in this jeering temper, and usually so little good sense, that the Christian is bound to oppose it both in himself and in others. Cheerfulness is his privilege; but surely he may be happy in his mind without planting thorns elsewhere: nay, it proceeds from the want of true happiness, if he can endure at any rate such a contemptible shadow of it. — True peace is gentle in itself, and glows most

sweetly in diffusing gentleness and kindness on every side. The happy Christian would increase his own joy, by making, if possible, every one happy about him.

CHAPTER XXX.

It is a great point of Christian Wisdom to distinguish well between Nature and Grace:

EVERY real believer hath an old man and a new, an Esau and a Jacob, a carnal mind and a spiritual mind, within him : and these are contrary the one to the other ; so that he cannot always do the right things that he would do for God, nor crush the evil things that he would not do within himself.

These opposite principles have too opposite laws or rules of action and power. The inclination and effect of the one are constantly directed to self, and to carnal things for the indulgence of self; and those of the other to God, and to the spiritual things for the glory of God.

Men under nature, having only one of these principles, cannot, in their natural state, discern the other. It is by grace, as by a rule, that they are able to measure nature, and to know the tendencies and proportions of both grace and nature, within themselves. " He that is spiritual, judgeth or discerneth all things ; yet he himself is judged of no man."

Nature in the Christian is for cleaving to sense,

to its own doings, and to its own powers, even in religion: but grace in his soul is for living by faith, above and often against the feelings of sense, upon "the truth as it is in Jesus," and upon his work and working, for life and salvation.

Nature loves to show and set off itself, and to be admired as excellent, eminent, wise, and great, in the eyes of men. Grace doth not set much by itself, but is lowly and humble, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, dreads the applauses of men, and makes the soul see, that it is so mere a nothing in itself, that it must receive out of the fulness of Christ every one of its blessings, from the least spark of grace to the bright crown of glory.

Nature is quarrelsome, impatient, and full of restlessness, desiring its own objects immediately and independently, and applying all it receives to its own ease or aggrandizement. Grace seeketh not her own, but the things which are Jesus Christ's, makes the spirit meek, and mild, and patient, and quiets it with the will and love of God in all things.

Nature hates the cross, and shuns it as a bitter and evil thing; it struggles hard not to feel it, and, when it feels it, to get rid of it, without any other consideration than that it is painful, and hinders all indulgences and gratifications. But grace submits to the cross with humble resignation, and desires that God's purpose may be answered by it; like as a wise patient wishes that his physic may have its due effect, however unpleasant and distasteful it may be in the act of receiving.

When nature attempts holy duties, as she some-

times will, either in fear or in pride, it is to make herself rich and increased in goods by them, so that she may have something wherewith to purchase even of God himself. But grace comes to the obedience of faith, not to live or purchase life, but because she is truly alive already to God; and she acts, not for her own exaltation, but for the glory of him who only can exalt, and who fills the hungry with good things, while the rich he sends empty away.

Nature admires dignity, and parade, and pomp, and outward splendour; it seeks to be pleased with sweet sounds, fine language, decorated places, and genteel company; and all this in religion too. Whereas grace shuns and distastes all gay appearances of earth, thinks of Christ in a stable, and of all he did and suffered to stain the pride of flesh and blood; and receives the favour of God as a precious pearl, for its own intrinsic and eternal value, and not for the sake of any outward things different in kind from its own.

Nature loves life, and to see good days in this world, and as many of them as possible; it shudders to give up its temporal enjoyments and carnal hopes, and would endure a great alloy of care and trouble, rather than part with the lying vanities to which it is wedded, and in which it delights. Grace, contrariwise, can say with holy Job, "I would not live always" upon earth, if I might; for "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." Grace can think upon death as a friend, and hath often met him as such; looking forward to the crown of glory, which death can only lead to,

but never can take away: and all its trials here only cause a stronger breathing and livelier expectation of the heavenly home.

Nature is forward to speak, and loves to be heard, and will be angry if not regarded, and will do much to be seen and known. Grace is slow to speak, and slow to wrath; wishes to hear, and learn, and understand; delights not to be in the chief seat, but is content with the lowest; and had rather lay up spiritual treasure in the heart, than babble it away, for selfish aims, with the tongue. It is not petulant or vexed if disregarded, but commits itself and the whole of the matter to God.

Nature draweth all from its own fund, and carrieth all back, and with interest, if possible, to itself again. But grace receiveth all from God, and is never so truly delighted, as when God receiveth the whole of the glory, as his just return.

These are a few of the many distinct operations of nature and grace. But sometimes they are so perplexed and interwoven with each other, through the craft and duplicity of the fallen natural principle, that it requires the greatest watchfulness and attention of the Christian, to unravel and divide them. The fact is, the two principles live at one time, act at one time; and will be found in one and the same person at all times and in all things, while he lives upon earth. The Christian cannot avoid the activity of his natural or carnal mind; though, by that faith and prayer, which removes the spiritual mountains of difficulty, he is to strive, and may prevail against its high rule and predominancy. Carnality

will exist, while he exists below; but it must not be the reigning and triumphant principle within him. On the other hand, grace, which is pure and simple in all its own acts and intentions, and resolves every thing with a single eye and a single heart unto God, must take the lead, and bring the other into the closest captivity and obedience that can be unto Christ. This is the daily battle and warfare, which passes within the Christian, and which no eye can see, but the eye of God and his own: yea, not his own always, nor always alike. Thus, when grace prevails, there ensues what is called mortification, self-denials, humiliation, renunciation, and all the other exercises, which are painful to the flesh, or nature, and its will and ways. On the contrary, when nature is uppermost, there ever will arise coldness towards God, faintness in duty, doubts, reasonings, discomforts, fear of man, fear of death, and a whole world full of weaknesses, hinderances, and temptations. By the superiority of these different effects in the soul, may easily be seen, if attended to, the superiority of one or other of their respective principles. When there is a strong animal or carnal nature in the believer, though with a good measure of grace, and trial comes of a powerful and threatening kind, O what a tumult is raised within! Nature struggles for ease, and winds, and turns, and frets, and laments, and uses a thousand shifts to carry off the believer from the battle, or to melt away his heart in the midst of it. Grace, on the other hand, tells him, that now is his time to act like the Christian, to lay hold upon Christ and his promises, to take up

the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, and the helmet of salvation, and to withstand at least, if not even to meet, the enemy; that he shall conquer the trial by suffering the will of God, it being his present duty to trust, to hope, to pray, to wait; and that, in a short time at the utmost, all shall end well, and redound both to his Redeemer's honour and his own improvement. What conflicts, perturbations, hopes, resignations, despondencies, will not the Christian find in the opposition of the carnal and the spiritual life; when temptations, troubles, or trials of any sort are to prove the strength of both? And yet, after the temptation, it is in some measure with him, as it was with Christ after his—comforts, like angels, will minister unto him. There is such a peaceable fruit of righteousness succeeding to these grievous things, as will make the believer a most ample amends for all his sorrows. But if this fruit should be deferred in the present life, it will be but the more welcome and glorious, when the soul bursts out from the bonds of clay, and leaves all sin and a sinful nature behind it.

CHAPTER XXXI.

On Temptations.

IT is a great part of the Christian warfare to encounter temptations. When a man truly becomes Christ's soldier, he is armed from head to foot by

him; because, from head to foot will his enemies attack him with all sorts of weapons, to inflict all possible distress, where they cannot overwhelm with destruction. He hath, because he needs, "the whole armour of God," that he may both stand and withstand, during the evil day of this mortal life.

O how many fiery darts are thrown, with all the vehemence of spirits, against the Christian's soul! If his armour doth not sit close upon him, and if the shield of faith be not well and constantly held up to catch and repel the assault; how many sore, and almost venomous wounds, will he not endure? Nay, if the Christian think to be only upon the defence, and fight not in his turn; it will be with him, as it is in all defensive wars among men, very troublesome and very disadvantageous. He hath therefore a weapon given him, that he may attack too; and when he wields, in the strength of his Captain, "the sword of the Spirit," which is "the word of God," the great spiritual foe remembers the deep strokes he received by it from Christ himself at his temptation, and shrinks away from its edge. If the Christian should be so unwise as to fight the enemy in his own might, and without this armour, he would suffer as a man must do that would encounter a whole host in array, (every individual of which is almost infinitely stronger than himself,) naked, unsupported, unarmed. None know the strength of the world, the flesh, and the devil, but those who have life, and are called to oppose them; just as the force of a stream is tried by the resistance made against it. The people of Christ too often fall into

an unprescribed way of fighting, through a presumption of their own conduct and power, and therefore are often brought off from the field wounded and half dead : and it is through the mercy and grace of their Lord, that they are not entirely captured and destroyed. They are usually more ready to look to their armour, and call upon their Leader, in great trials ; and therefore they prevail : but when they despise the strength of a little temptation, and fight against it in their own, then it is that they are often taught their inward and natural weakness, by losing the day. In their Captain's armour, in his strength, and by his sword, " they must resist the devil ;" and so to their joy shall they find, that he will presently fly away from them.

Nothing escapes the vigilance of this foe. He observes the particular constitutions of persons ; and he makes his attacks upon all the weak and unguarded parts. He suits his devices to the frame of their dispositions ; and if they are ignorant of those devices, he will often make sad havoc and distress.

He also knows that the Christian hath traitors in his own bosom, once under full diabolical command, and now not absolutely suppressed and confined. These he bribes, entices, advises, corresponds with, and acts by ; so that when the assault is made from without, these suspicious inmates are not idle within, but join hand, head, and heart, as it were, to throw all open to the enemy.

Hence, for these inbred foes, envy, pride, malice, lust, and all the confederacy of black and carnal principles, Satan finds out and proposes their several

objects of desire. These are soon converted into engines of war against the soul; and if the Christian's thoughts are not brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, they will lead him in bonds (as it were) to his old master, who used, before he was a Christian, to "take him captive at his will." What disgrace doth this bring to his holy profession: and what misery, both before and after his recovery, to himself!

Satan hath also sly and subtle temptations, perverted from religion itself, by which he often assaults the mind. Sometimes he will raise snares from zeal, love, light, enlargement, and success in duties, by which to flatter the Christian into a high opinion of himself, and of his gifts and graces, in order to take him off his guard, or to unclothe him of his humility. When he can make a man proud, he makes him like himself; and when unclean, like a beast. At other times he will inject the very poison and curse of his own diabolical spirit, by darting evil thoughts; despairing or blasphemous suggestions; vile conceptions of Christ, his word, his work, and all his salvation; preposterous, doubting, distracting, and presuming fancies; and an almost infinite variety of abominable suggestions; which, if the soul be unarmed and unguarded, will harass it to the utmost distress. He hath no pity; nor will he leave off for groans or wailing, agonies or tears. These rather encourage him, if there be nothing but these. The only thing he dreads is the sword of the Spirit; and the only thing he cannot pierce is the armour of God. Therefore, when all this

sad business is going forward, the Christian should not lie crying on the ground like one bereft of his senses, but should call upon his Captain for the armour and the sword, and with these should venture on boldly, trusting to the divine strength which is promised against the foe. When he can do this, the conflict will soon be over. It is yielding, hearkening, reasoning, and parleying, which occasions all the mischief.

I can talk of all this, my fellow-christian, and I know it likewise to be right and true; but I am often beset, and have often been as much to seek as thou canst be, in this hard, yet glorious service. To this moment I feel my own miserable weakness, when left in the least degree to myself. I have had my drubbings, my falls, my horrors, my conflicts, as well as thou; and I have been taught by them, though with much slowness, (I speak it with shame and sorrow,) to fly to the right refuge, to lay hold of the right strength, to buckle on the right armour, and to fall on with the right sword. When I have done this with most alertness, and with the most unreserved confidence in my divine Master, I have been most successful, and most easily have prevailed. When I have lingered, or dallied, or tampered with my foe, or else thought that I could cope with him by myself, because he hath appeared under a mean disguise; then I have fainted and failed; then have I sunk, and been surely overthrown. My rebuffs have made me a little more wary of my own heart, as well as of my spiritual adversaries; and I find it the best way to begin speedily with prayer to HIM

that heareth, that I may truly be ready for whatever may come upon me.

While we are in the flesh, all this must be more or less our daily exercise. And the use of it is, chiefly, to keep our hearts from pride and sloth, to bring down the love of self in all its desires, and the love of sin in all its forms, to endear Christ to our souls in all the ways of his salvation, to cause us to give up ourselves to him with less reserve, to wean us from earth and earthly comforts, and to fix our affections more firmly on heaven. If all this ensue, we shall then have happily disappointed the devil, and beaten him with his own weapons; and therefore shall rejoice for every trial and conflict, which have led us on towards the attainment of that blessed state of mind, which is the true life and expectation of a Christian in this world. O that I may remember these things for myself, while I am aiming to stir up the minds of others to the remembrance of them! Lord, thy strength is made perfect in weakness, and thy wisdom in folly; I call upon thee, therefore, and upon thee alone, to be the Guide, the Help, the Defender, and Deliverer of my soul! "Thou art FAITHFUL that has promised;" and here I rest my every hope of safety and salvation.

CHAPTER XXXII.

On Adversity.

WE naturally love the world, and the things that are in the world; and this love, unsubdued, is the sole cause and ground of what are called mortifications and disappointments from the world. If the love of Christ prevailed more in us, it would not be in the power of outward things to give us so much pain as they do; or rather, if this love were perfect in us, we should be ashamed and sorry that these things should give us any pain at all.

This is the truth, but how do we use it? Very often, in the time of trial, we make no other use than to assent to it as a truth, and there leave it. Reflections of this kind are but orations to the winds, unless grace shall second and enforce them. The most trifling loss, as I have often observed in myself and others, is sufficient to unhinge and throw us out of order, if we have no stronger power than our own to keep us in it.

There is not a plant upon earth, how unsightly and bitter soever, but which hath an end for its being. God, likewise, hath not intended his providential works, however adverse or disagreeable to our sense, but for some just purpose and design. There is a needs be, if we "fall into divers temptations." And, if needful, then they are right and profitable, and will appear to be so at the last.

We have many evil humours that require correction; and God sends adversity as a medicine for the soul. When it comes with grace into the spirit of a Christian, how doth it soften and blunt his rough and acid dispositions, how reform and lower his swelling and confident frames, how chasten and subdue his restless and impatient tempers; while the better part, his renewed mind, gathers strength, and holiness, and resignation, and hope! We shall indeed thank God heartily for all our adversities by-and-by; and, though they are not to be counted as any part of our inheritance, we shall rejoice eternally, that they were graciously made a part of the means for bringing us to it. Lazarus himself can now rejoice over all his sores.

The apostle Paul was a chosen vessel, and dearly beloved of the Lord; but the Lord did not say, concerning him, what great things he was to do or enjoy, (though nobody perhaps ever did more for Christ, or enjoyed more of him upon earth,) but "what great things he must suffer for my name's sake." The flesh shrinks at this; but grace can enable the soul to count it all joy when it falls into divers temptations; not for the grief that is in them, for that would be unnatural, but for the peaceable fruits of righteousness which they shall produce in the end.

We must pray, then, to trust the wisdom and love of God in all sorrowful dispensations, since he doth not willingly or wantonly afflict his children, nor send one sorrow more than what is absolutely necessary to their true edification and welfare.

When we can bear all trouble as a part of the burden of Christ, and can obtain his assistance to bear it with us; we shall find it daily grow lighter and lighter, and at length press upon us only like the burden of wings on a bird, enabling us to fly the swifter and the higher towards heaven.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

On Prosperity.

God's people are seldom trusted with much prosperity; and, when they are, it very rarely appears for their good. The things of earth and time, in affluence or abundance, have a fascinating power over the carnal senses, entice them first into the ways of evil, and then (if grace prevent not) intoxicate them with it. How many spiritual sots are there in the world, who, though averse to gross intemperance, are reeling instead of running in the path of duty, their heads being turned with the fumes of this earth, and their hearts "waxed gross" through the "abundance of her delicacies?" And it is one dreadful proof of the strength of this intoxication upon them, when they hate to be told of it, and feel angry, not at themselves, but at the friendly and faithful informer.

The gaiety, parade, lightness, and lofty airs of many religious professors, too well show, what a dangerous thing it is to possess much of this world,

and how easily our hearts may be made drunk, and then drowned in sensuality, if not in perdition. If Christ and his Apostles were now upon earth, in their plain and lowly form, it is much to be feared that they would be thought hardly good company enough for many of the present race of genteel and modish professors of religion.

It is an excellent prayer, which Christians in worldly prosperity cannot remember too often, "In all time of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us!" We want his help then, more if possible than in adversity; lest "the lust of other things, entering in, should choke the word, and it become unfruitful." We have weak heads and a disordered appetite, which are soon overcharged with a full cup of temporal prosperity. "They were filled," says the Lord, speaking by the prophet to the Jews, "they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten me."

It was the good advice of a wise man: "Seek not proud riches, but such as thou mayest get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and leave contentedly."

There is no doubt but that Christians, with worldly riches, may do abundance of worldly good to others; and it is one proof, that God is in them of a truth when they do so: yet there is very great reason to pray, that, while they are God's stewards to feed other people, they may be careful not to be starved themselves, and that no pride may arise in their hearts through these outward displays of zeal for the Lord of hosts. These may seem great things

to men ; but, if we remember the widow and her two mites, we may understand that something else is greater before God, than any administration only of carnal and temporal things.

Our hearts need no gross damps of this world to cool them. On the contrary, God by troubles frequently stirs up his own grace and life in them, as we stir our fires, that they may kindle more freely, shine more brightly, and glow more strongly for our comfort. Whatever draws us nearest to God, cannot be real adversity. Whatever entices us from him, deserves not the name of prosperity.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Luxury indecent for Christians.

LUXURY is to pride, what the body is to the soul. It gives substance to that depraved temper, which Satan occasioned to man, and which reigns in himself with the most malignant subtlety, ruling also, where it is permitted, the faculties of creatures and the grossness of matter. It first reduced him from angel to devil; and it hath degraded mankind almost to both devil and beast.

A very great part of the world's pursuit is indulgence to the flesh, by procuring not the mere necessities, (for these are in a small compass,) but the pomps, the shows, the imaginary wants, or the real luxuries of this present life. . If they have much

goods laid up for many years, no higher thought remains, but to take their ease, to eat, to drink, and be merry. They have strange and wretched notions of spiritual and eternal enjoyments: heaven and heavenly things are necessarily in their very nature too refined for those whose heart is ever in the dirt, and whose whole life and hope are supported by what lives and grows upon it. Like a man whom I remember to have seen, they have no "desire to sit singing Hallelujah upon a bare cloud (as he expressed it) all the day long, without any thing to eat or to drink." This was his idea of heaven: and have those people any better or more solid thoughts of its glories, who prefer to them (as the men of this world uniformly do) the poor vile trash and sordid attainment of the earth? Alas! so it is; no natural man hath any true regard for God or his soul, but only for his carcass and the world.

The primitive Christians were distinguished as well for the plainness and simplicity of their manners, as for an exact frugality in all their affairs. They thought, and with great truth, that to do otherwise would be both unseemly for their profession, and injurious to the poor. People who want all for themselves, as the luxurious ever must, (except in some rare cases,) can have but little, if any thing, "to give to him that needeth;" and, what is worse, a luxurious pampered person hath usually no heart to give at all, but hath lost his bowels of compassion, through the excess and voluptuousness reigning within him. Hence it is, that the very rich and very great are commonly hard-hearted: while in the

middle ranks of life, both sympathy and benevolence are frequently found to lighten the load of woe. These, it is true, may be all mere nature; but they are however not the least precious remains of original beauty among its ruins.

To glut the stomach, is to starve the mind; vainly to dress up the body, is to strip the soul; to appear great before men, is really to be little in the eyes of God; to be anxious for this world alone, is to lose the true enjoyment both of it and a better. Yet all these compose the prime wisdom of worldly men. But should such be the object, the pursuit, the practice of a Christian? Can the pilgrim, or traveller, the stranger and sojourner upon earth, who talks of "seeking a better country and a heavenly," make it his business to delight or indulge his flesh and carnal affections in modes like these? It seems, indeed, a sort of burlesque upon godliness, that a creature, proud, pampered, glutted, adorned, and wallowing in lazy and luxurious life, should solemnly profess meekness and lowliness of mind, abstraction from a sinful world, deadness to earthly vanity, humble expectations of heaven, and a life of faith and communion with God till heaven be attained.— I am not a monk, nor monkishly inclined; but surely the modern luxury among many professors is neither the characteristic nor ornament of Christian life, and cannot, from its own nature, be the means appointed either to win or to wean men from mammon to God. It is indeed with pain and reluctance, that this subject of pride, laziness, and luxury, which usually go together, is here mentioned, and especially that there

is so much occasion for mentioning it, in our day and in our land. To use, and liberally to use, God's temporal mercies with cheerful thankfulness, is one thing; but to "nourish our carnal hearts as in a day of slaughter," to live only for ourselves, and to be filled with a fulness of earth instead of God, is quite another. The Apostle speaks of "using the world and not abusing it," plainly intimating the distinction and the difficulty. For this reason most probably it is, that the Lord keeps the bulk of his people out of worldly snares by poverty and trouble, for which they will see more cause to thank him hereafter, than the wealthy and the great for all their riches. When the world lies heavy and close upon the heart, O with what a sluggish slowness doth it rise up towards heaven!

Lord, above all thy gifts, give me thyself! I may be happy without the creatures, but I must be wretched for ever without thee. Against all my carnal affections and desires, above all my apprehensions and views, beyond all my hopes and expectations, O do thou lead me through time to eternity, and be my life, my love, my light, my Lord, and my all in all!

CHAPTER XXXV.

There are many first that shall be last.

OUR opinion of persons and things is usually taken from outward forms and appearances; but God look-

eth on the heart and spirit, which are the true and only substantial essence or being.

What a wonderful revolution shall the day of God make upon the earth ! Many high and towering professors, extolled by others and prized by themselves, shall be glad to take even the meanest and the lowest rooms, deeply thankful not to be quite thrust out of the kingdom ; while some poor dejected and despised souls, who passed their days almost unknowing and unknown with respect to the world, shall shine forth as the stars in the firmament of heaven, to the surprise and astonishment of every eye.

We greatly mistake, in general, with respect to spiritual glory. It doth not consist in the splendour of gifts and talents, or any bodily exercise (as the Apostle calls it) of the animal frame, but in the less glaring, though far more solid, ornament of a meek and quiet spirit ; not in the attraction or admiration of men, but in the love and enjoyment of God ; not in the subtle and lofty aspirings even of the inward man, but in self-abasement, simplicity, humbleness, and sincerity of mind, resignation of soul to God, victory over self, and every thing else that belongs to true lowliness and profound humiliation. This is " real and living " glory ; but not the glory of the world or of the flesh, for these neither understand nor desire it. Alas ! how little is it considered, that an outward *religious act* and *religion* itself are two things very distinct and very separable ! Scribes, pharisees, and hypocrites, have performed the one with the greatest care and exactness ; but all the

while were further from the kingdom of God than even publicans and harlots: the other, consisting in divine life and inward union of the soul with Christ, is the portion and experience of none but the children of God.

We may be proud of pretended virtues; and, perhaps, it is possible to be proud even of grace itself, opposite as it is to that fallen principle of corrupted nature; but it is not so possible to think nothing of ourselves, and to be contented with the slight and contempt of others; to prefer all God's children to ourselves, and to place our seat far below theirs; to love our meekest and our humblest thoughts, and to hate bitterly the emotions of pride, and the urgings of anger and arrogance. Yet all this is the true and solid dignity of a Christian soul, and brings it nearest to the likeness of Christ, if not nearest to his throne.

O Lord, help me to understand myself. May I wish to see, not how great and good, (as flesh would have it,) but how mean and vile I am. Preserve me from high thoughts of myself; for these become not a sinful dying worm, who lives every moment upon a breath of air; nor yet do they become a redeemed sinner, whose only plea must be mercy, who hath nothing of his own but sin, and who by grace alone can be saved, according to thy gift, O Lord, my God!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

On Talents.

IT is the sentence of an Apostle, uttering the mind of the Holy Ghost, that though he himself "should speak with the tongues of men, and of angels," that is, with the highest degree of the most energetic or zealous eloquence, "and had not CHARITY," or the LOVE of God in his heart, he "should become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." He goes farther: "Though I," says he, "have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." He doth not stop here: "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Awful words! The possibility of such a case (and surely the Apostle had not been led to state it, if it were not possible) should alarm the mind of every one who professeth to believe and follow the gospel of Christ.

It is obvious, at first view, that GRACE and GIFTS are two things, and that their separate effects or consequences, to the possessors of either, may be different also.

Grace, or charity, or love, which have nearly the same sense when applied to the life of God in the soul of man, is the special influence of the Holy Spirit

dwelling in the heart. This, coming from God, unites man in love to God through Christ, and shows itself in the various ways of patience, resignation, self-denial, abstraction from envy and other malignant passions, with all those other blessed fruits, which the Apostle beautifully describes as growing out of it, and which cannot truly grow out of any other principle.

But eloquence, prophecy, understanding of mysteries, attainment of theoretic knowledge, and even that sort of faith itself which rests on rational evidence only, or working miracles, as well as almsgiving and the surrender of life, may all be possessed without grace, and may answer ends too that are not gracious. They may be gifts indeed from God; and so is food or health; but they are often gifts to the mere natural man, and may be held, like all other natural faculties, either with or without any thing better.

A man may understand and reason upon the terms grace, justification, regeneration, and other holy and spiritual principles, so far as they can be the objects of human apprehension, and yet have no share in the truths implied by them, and consequently be ruined at the last.

Ahithophel was eloquent and wise, almost as the oracle of God: 2 Sam. xvi. 23. Saul, as well as Balaam, was among the prophets: 1 Sam. xix. 24. Solomon understood all mysteries and knowledge, but found them vain and insufficient to keep him from falling. Judas preached, and wrought miracles; but at the same time had a devil: Luke ix.

1, 2. The Pharisees gave great alms; but were a generation of vipers. Even heathens themselves, and amongst them poor Indian women too, have surrendered up their bodies to torture and death; but none of them, certainly, either with any sense of the love of God, or for his glory. The Apostle's argument is, that these outward gifts ALONE cannot possibly profit to eternity, because they cease or vanish in time: even the believer's holy knowledge, as it is possessed here, shall be done away, because it is partial, and sees through the medium of corruptible sense, as through a glass darkly or enigmatically; which will not be the case in the soul's future perfect and pure vision of God: but charity, or the divine love, being from the divine essence, and essential also to the very being of a true Christian, can never fail, nor cease, nor vanish away.

All this proves the assertion, that grace and gifts are two separable things, even in the profession of the truest religion. Grace is peculiar to the children of God; gifts may be possessed by men, as such, whether heathen or Christian. The former is essential to the divine life; the latter, at best, only ornamental or subordinate. A man may go to heaven without gifts; but, if he had all the fine parts and all the advantages of religious life and profession in the world, without grace, they would in the end profit him nothing. Many, it is to be feared, have written and spoken well concerning salvation, who never inwardly experienced or enjoyed it. They knew the theory, but not the thing.

By their fruits, such ever were, and ever will be,

known. They have called Christ, "Lord, Lord;" and this was easy enough: but to do the things which he said, to take up his cross, and to follow him truly in the regeneration; this was above flesh and blood, and impossible to be done by those who have nothing else. This observation applies to professors at large: but the Redeemer himself carries it farther to persons in a higher class: "Many, many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied," or preached, "in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils," (from those who were under their dominion)? "and in thy name done many wonderful works," (perhaps made the means of converting souls, as Judas probably was)? "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, *ye that work iniquity.*" Thus it appears, the devils may be subject to a man through Christ; and yet (what is of infinitely more consequence to himself) his name may not be written in heaven.

Where grace and talents are indeed united, they capacitate the possessor not only to be useful, but to shine: and to shine thus, (like a diamond upon sable,) reflecting purely the Redeemer's glory, and foiled (as it were) with meekness and humility, is a blessing to be wished for on account of others, rather than for any man's own concern, and therefore not to be envied. He that envies another's abilities, forgets the Giver, and hath not learned the proper use of any, not even of his own. Great faculties require proportionally the greater grace to manage them; or the corruption of the heart will pervert them to private ends, as it hath but too evidently done in a

thousand cases. To colour the deception, there may be a show of zeal and abundance of activity with these talents, which may seem well laid out, and be very successful too among men, in the most serious and divine concerns: and yet, after all, *self*, that secret and subtle *self*, may be the main-spring, or final object of the whole. “Come, see *my* zeal for the Lord,” said Jehu; while his great purpose was earthly splendour and dominion for himself. Herod preserved John (as the word means) “and did many things” by his suggestion, “and heard him gladly;” but, through pride and lust, he murdered him at the last. And so Judas (as was mentioned before) prayed and preached, and undoubtedly wrought miracles, as fairly and clearly as the other apostles; or certainly he must have been suspected by them for the traitor at the Lord’s supper, without any further occasion of troubling Christ with their repeated questions, “Is it I? Is it I?” Had he been noticed for the least outward deficiency among those, “to whom even the devils were obedient through the name of Jesus,” John could have wanted no other sign: John xiii. 21—26. An old writer gives another remarkable instance:—An eloquent and distinguished orator maintained, in a set discourse, the truth of the Christian religion, with so much force and clearness, as to excite the admiration and astonishment of all that heard him. His friends warmly congratulated him on his success. He was alive to their praise; it was the very thing that he wanted. But to secure the honour (as he thought) the more entirely to himself, he vaunted, that, in taking the

other side of the argument, he could as easily pull down all he had raised, and establish the contrary upon its ruins. Divine justice, we are told, was not slow to vindicate the divine glory; for he, who, notwithstanding his great abilities, was before a spiritual fool, became soon afterwards a natural driveller and an incurable idiot. His eminent powers, which at first seemed to be in employment for God, turned out, upon trial, to be devoted to himself and his own vain glory. These and such like things should ever occasion "great searchings of heart."

Help me, O my God, to search mine! For this end, do thou thyself "examine me, and prove me: try my reins and my heart." Leave no corner unexplored; but discover the whole, as it is, to the eye of my mind; let, O let me never be deceived about myself, nor fatally be a stranger to myself, or to the principles of action and affection within me. Let these be all simple, all pure; give me the single eye, and the single heart, that no double view or intentions, no corrupt motive or desires, nothing, no, nothing but what proceedeth from thee, and leadeth to thee again, may direct and animate my soul. Let me cautiously regard all my faculties, and jealously watch over the application of all my powers, that every thing in me may proceed in the exactest conformity to thy will and word. It is my wish indeed, and this thou knowest, to act much *for* thee, but in no case and at no time *without* thee; and when thou callest me not to action, but to suffering and waiting, which is yet more difficult to man, O help me, like Abraham and Moses, to stand in patient submission

as they stood, though my trial be drawn out, like theirs, through a dull and unpromising length of years. Be thou with me, and all shall be well, whether I bear or do. If I am to be silent or passive, support me, for I cannot remain thus by myself: if I am called to act, "work in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure;" for all thy truth, and my own experience prove, that, in the business of spiritual life especially, "without thee I can do nothing."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

It is through Grace that all Ordinances are rightly used and become beneficial.

As there is a talent of speaking with grace the things that are true and profitable, so there is a talent of hearing with grace, that those things may be received with edification. We may too often see and bewail a customary slight mode of hearing, which, instead of enlivening, deadens; instead of warming, fixes the cold; instead of promoting the life of God within, only confirms the life of the flesh throughout. This is sharply reprehended in Ezek. xxxiii. 30—32.

Some are for hearing a variety of preachers, others a multitude of sermons; not for profit but for pleasure, not to digest and turn the discourses into spiritual nourishment, but to satisfy the hurry and bustle of nature, which doth not love patient reflection nor the meditating labour of the soul. To

hear only and commend this, and that, and the other preacher, however excellent and gracious, is poor employment indeed, which requires very little sense, and less grace, to perform. To set up men and forget God, to be extolling one man above another, and to be ready to quarrel and abuse for the sake of one poor worm against another; is all of it nothing more than the vileness of the carnal nature perversely crept into religious profession, and all of it equally wretched, impertinent, and vain. If this were the whole that is to be found in religion, it would not be a bad wish, that one's "life might rather be spent with philosophers."

To hear for amusement or criticism, to be delighted with flowery language, to be charmed with action, person, manner, and voice, may be well enough in the theatre or senate; but to attend upon God, to hear his word as for one's life, to be filled with the solid importance of divine things, and to carry them home into the heart for comfort and strength in the experience; this is quite another kind of business, which doth not so much engage the carnal mind or ear, as employ the most fervent exertions and the holiest affections of the soul. The one is rank abuse of a sacred institution, and perverted to lull the soul to sleep in carnal security, under the notion of a religious engagement; the other is finding, in the true and gracious use of the means, the advantage which the Lord intended by them.

It is better likewise to hear one sermon, and then to recollect it, to feed and ponder upon it, and to turn the matter of it into prayer, than to be present

at four, five, or six in a day, as some have been, and not be able at last to give a tolerable account of any one of them. The divine life of a Christian doth not consist in mere hearing, any more than his natural life in always eating; but in digesting and in bringing what he hears, as so much nourishment, into the very frame and strength of his soul.

Faith must be mixed with this and with all ordinances and sacraments, otherwise the outward man alone acts, while the inner man is asleep or dead; and so that "which should have been for welfare only, becomes an occasion of falling."

"*How* have I heard? not *how much*?" is the best inquiry. Our Lord directs us to consider it well, where he says, "Take heed how ye hear." And if we reflect, that God's word is a "savour of life unto life, or of death unto death," in them that do hear it; surely in so solemn an affair, we ought to pray before we hear, to watch unto prayer in hearing, and to mix faith and prayer with what we have heard, that it may turn to our good, and not to our sorrow. 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

On the profitable hearing of the Word.

THIS subject is of so much importance, as to demand some farther reflections. It is a trite observation, that we have two ears, and but one tongue.

The natural inference, however, becomes the more important, when authorized by the Holy Ghost: "Let every man be swift to hear, and slow to speak."

But though swiftness of hearing be right, it is only so upon just principles, and for a proper end. A person may be swift to hear evil, through the corruption of nature, for no other purpose than to practise it. In such a case, slowness, or deafness itself, is comparatively a blessing.

It appears then, that there are two sorts of hearing, or faculties, the spiritual and the carnal, the right and the wrong. The one formed and empowered by grace; the other left, as it came into the world, under the perverseness and depravity of nature. We will consider both of these as briefly as possible.

When man fell from God, he not only lost the right use of the natural faculties, which consisted in raising spiritual and divine ideas from the outward objects; but the faculties themselves were diminished, and, instead of serving the Creator, and showing forth his glory in the knowledge and happiness of a perfect creature, were corrupted to obey a fallen spirit in every ministration of sin, whether in filthiness, baseness, pride, or malignity. The ear, amongst these, became the organ of a depraved understanding, and is often put, by a figure, for the depraved understanding itself. And because men in their state of nature are so besotted and blinded by sin, as to have no understanding (or what is worse than none) in spiritual things, they are said to have no ears in those things. On the other hand, our Lord fre-

quently addresses himself to those, "who have ears to hear;" manifestly implying, that the faithful only can hear to purpose, and that all others are, in a certain sense, without ears, that is, incapable of understanding what they outwardly do hear. This corrupted faculty cannot therefore receive the truth; but, through gross misapprehension, can only pervert it, turning good into bad, and the bad into worse and worse.

The true faculty is indeed a new creation, and consequently the operation and gift of God. The Lord makes "the hearing ear and the seeing eye," said the wise man; or, as Elihu expresses it to the same purpose, "God openeth the ears of men and scaleth their instruction." In vain might men speak, as Ezekiel would have spoken to that emblem of sinners spiritually dead, "the dry bones," unless the Lord of power vouchsafe to bless, and to impart the truth and strength of a right understanding to the mind.

But where this new faculty is given, the believer should remember, with anxious concern, that even there also remaineth the old. They both exist at once in the same person, and often produce, if care be not taken, and a better care than his own, a sort of neutral exercise of faculties, employing them upon the very best things to no purpose at all, and sometimes to purposes which, it might be thought, no gracious person could allow or endure. The fact is, professors hear the truth too much in their old man; they do not mix faith with what they hear; and so they become triflers in divine things, and grow in-

insipid and indifferent to them. Their new man is not renewed day by day, through holy meditation and prayer, and therefore seems to grow weaker; while their old man gathers strength and inclination for the things of the flesh and the world. They do not, as the martyr of old said, "join the ears of their head and their heart together."

Hence, in Christian profession, we have such just complaint of "heavy ears." Persons shall have been long under the word, and yet shall have profited so little for the time, that they appear like infants when they ought to be full grown, or dwarfs, and misshapen dwarfs too, at the age of maturity. This dulness of hearing often makes it needful that such should be "taught again the first principles of the oracles of God;" because, as the Apostle says, "being babes, they have no experience in the word of righteousness." What a strange sight is this! A man in leading-strings; a person in years wailing for the breast! And yet meat, and especially "strong meat," is not good for him: he cannot digest it. He is capable of taking nothing but milk: and it is well, if the only "pure milk" will satisfy him.

There is also, in Christian profession, what the Scripture calls "an uncircumcised ear." A man with an uncircumcised ear is unsubdued by what he hears, so that his "thoughts are not brought into captivity," nor into sweet subjection, unto Christ. He hears, therefore, by his own powers. His soul consequently is not bent into meekness under the word; but coming to it as a critic or judge, with a high look and a lofty heart, he squares all things by

his own rule and reason, and determines all by his own measure and understanding. When the truth is made particular to him, he acts, like some high professors of old, and like all who are "uncircumcised in heart and ears," (Acts vii. 51.)—he "resists the Holy Ghost." Such a one "receiveth not correction: truth is perished" to him, "and cut off from his mouth." He is therefore not the better for what he hears, but the worse, converting the wholesome nourishment, through his cachectic or bad habit, into poison or disease. In process of time, he grows both careless and hardened under the word; and, being now sermon-proof, receives no more real impression from the gospel than the flinty rock from a shower of rain. Alas! alas! how often may one bewail these uncircumcised ears!

The Apostle reminds us also of "itching ears," which are not so desirous of their own proper exercise of receiving the truth, as of being tickled and amused. A light thing, a mere feather, will answer this purpose better than that two-edged sword, which cuts beneath the skin, and penetrates to the very "thoughts and intents of the heart." The itching ear takes a wonderful pleasure in quaint or odd expressions, or in flowing, polished, or rhetorical phrases and language. To it there are no such charms as the charms of manner and words; a rich and glowing diction, a correct and masterly style, the grace of delivery, the force of reason, and the prettiness of sublimity of thought. These are excellencies indispensable and invaluable to the curious ear. A good  especially if there be any wit in it, will tickle it

almost to an ecstasy. Sometimes mere rodomontade will serve the end, which is, to divert and be diverted. A pathetic or melancholy discourse will also tickle well an itching ear, though in a different way; for if the animal passions be moved, if the old Adam be wrought upon, if the common feelings of the carnal nature be excited with any degree of emotion; these will gratify and please that carnal nature, like the hearing of tragedies and oratorios, even to rapture and excess, so as almost to be mistaken for religion and grace. In all this there may not be one particle of that life of the new man, "which is renewed after the image of him that created him." I do not mean that a Christian is to be divested of the common feelings of humanity, but that he is not to mistake these for the actings of grace in the things of God, nor from the word of God to seek for so low an object as the gratification of these. He is not to be entertained but edified; not to be amused but corrected; not to be pleased only but profited; not to crave indulgence to the "desires of the flesh and of the mind," for this every worldling craves; but through grace to subdue his evil propensities and affections, and to confine nature within its bounds, that the life of Christ may be made manifest, and that the fruits of faith may abound to the divine glory. O how much more wise and happy is this for the soul, than the mean and trifling enjoyment that can be procured for itching ears!

There is also, to mention no more, what a gracious and dear friend of mine has well styled, that monster in profession, who is all ear. No faculty,

in religious matters, but this one: no head to apprehend, no heart to love and experience, no hands to act for Christ, no feet to walk in the obedience of God; but all—all ear. A new preacher, a fine preacher, a long sermon, sermon after sermon, discourses about the talents of preachers and the beauties of sermons, and sometimes matters not quite so good as these, are objects of supreme delight for too many, who rather wish to hear about Christ than to live upon him, and to have a good seat under the sound of the gospel than to be enjoying the power of it. O what a poor sort of professing life is this! to mistake air for food, and mere hearing for godliness! Alas! what will this avail the soul, when it shall need strength and courage to resist the powers of darkness and to enter the gloomy valley of the dead!

The true servants of God have, in a certain subordinate sense, "their ears opened, or pierced," according to the meaning of the rite in the law; and thus they are made "his own for ever." They come willingly, in the day of his power, to the door of his house, even to Christ the only door of the "true tabernacle, which God hath pitched and not man;" and there each of them joyfully declares, "I would not, and, in thy strength, I will not, go away, O Lord, from thee, because I love thee, and I love thine house, and because it is good for me to be with thee." By this spiritual operation they are made alive to God, and are enabled spiritually to hear his word, and to have it "written in their inward parts," and thus to serve and live for God in

Christ with life eternal. They cannot endure another service; and any voice but the voice of their Master, they will neither delight in, nor obey. As dutiful servants, and adopted children, they listen to his holy word, follow his heavenly will, seek not their own but his honour and glory, and count no thing of so much value beneath the sun as to finish their course with joy. O my soul, mayest thou be found with these, when the Lord shall "make up his jewels, and shall spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him!" Thou shalt then enter into his house indeed, and dwell with him for ever and ever.

Another type in the law affords us a farther idea on this interesting subject. The sanctifying oil was not only to be put upon the right hand, the right foot, and the right ear of the leper, but upon the extremities, the thumb, the great toe, the tip, of those right members; in order to show, that, in our renewing by the Holy Spirit, we must expect all true strength, even the least and to the utmost, all our right obedience, and all our hearing to profit, from that unction of the Holy One. This anointing, which is received of Christ, even "the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot receive, abideth in" the real Christian, and by this, in fact, he becomes a Christian, that is, an anointed person: and the same anointing teacheth him "of all things, and is true, and not a lie." Thus he hears, and hears aright. He hears inwardly, and with life; and, by grace in this hearing, increases life. Sounds, mere sounds, are nothing, and words alone nothing; but

the word and truth of Christ, spiritually received and experimentally digested, are, in his eye, and heart, and ear, the all in all of every ordinance and proclamation of the gospel.

I would come into the power of these things, O my Lord, more and more; and I lament with deep compunction that my progression is so small, my true hearing so dull, my affections so cold, my faith so weak, my hope so drooping, and my whole man so often disordered and defiled by infirmity. O how great and difficult a thing is it to be a Christian!—to live, and hope, and walk, truly by the faith of thee the Son of God! Do thou, who art the High Priest of my profession, circumcise and “pierce my ear,” that I may be made affectionately thine own for ever: anoint it also with thine holy oil, that I may receive rightly and understand truly the words of eternal life, the rich and the profound mysteries of thy heavenly kingdom. So shall I hear, and live, and learn, and love, till I see thee in thy glory; and then, stripped of all my own imperfection and frailty, but clothed upon with thy righteousness and salvation, I shall magnify thine holy name amongst thy redeemed, in the great, the universal, the everlasting Hallelujah.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Upon Declensions from God.

ALAS ! how prone am I to fall into sin, and to leave the fountain of living waters ! My infirmities often prevail against me, and, contrary to the better will of my soul, drag me into the snares and bondage of corruption.

I have sinned : what shall I say unto thee, O thou Preserver of men ! If thou leave me to myself, if thou recover me not, I am gone for ever. " O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ! "

Thus I mourn and am vexed, when my corruptions are ready to overpower me. I should be lost, but for thy merciful aid : I must perish entirely, if the blood and righteousness of my dear Redeemer were not again and again applied to save and comfort me.

O what a miserable body do I bear about with me ! It is the very load, and plague, and prison of my soul. And yet how foolishly do I love it, and care for it ! and how much more time do I spend in nourishing this evil flesh than in seeking the peace of God, or the advancement and prosperity of my immortal mind ! I am ashamed, as a Christian, that I am not more ashamed of these things.

CHAPTER XL.

On Sobriety of Spirit.

A CHRISTIAN should desire, as a great privilege, the constant sobriety and calm recollection of his mind. Worldly things often flutter the animal spirits; and the disorder of these will too frequently throw the soul into confusion; so that it is liable to be carried away into what it condemns, through a sudden impression on its affections; or to be turned aside from what it approves, by the vehement onset of its passions. This want of inward sobriety is one great cause of all the irregularities which believers feel and bemoan in their passage to heaven.

Be sober, be vigilant; is a most necessary admonition to us, while we are in this unstable flesh, and within reach of such an adversary as the devil. If we are not abstracted, in due measure, from the crazy and drunken spirit of this world, to which we are naturally inclined, and from which grace can only deliver us at all; we shall be distracted with a thousand foolish and useless things, be exposed to numberless dangers and snares, be harassed with doubts and disorders, and often in our giddiness shall forget where we are, whither we are going, and what must shortly pass upon us. O this golden, glittering, dazzling cup of the mystical Babylon, this evil world! How often is it in her hand, held out towards us! How ready are we to take and to drink

of it ! But how full is it of the abominations and filthiness of her spiritual fornication and departure from God !

How difficult, duly considered, is the Christian's passage through life ! how marvellous his safe arrival in heaven ! It appears indeed to be nothing less than one of the greatest continued wonders of almighty goodness and power.

If a man were commanded to put to sea by himself in a small open boat, without any sustenance but what might fall from the skies, and with no directions but a chart and a compass, and thus to pass over a wide and tempestuous ocean ; some faint picture might be formed of the Christian's voyage to heaven. He too, in a feeble bark, has no chart but the word of God, no compass but the Spirit of God, no provisions but the daily grace of God in Christ, no safety from the raging waves of the world, or the roaring winds of the evil spirit, but the power of God, no ability to keep himself for one moment from sinking but through the faith which God giveth, and no hope of getting safe to the heavenly shore but from the truth of God in Christ Jesus. Indeed, and indeed, when a Christian considers all these perils on the one hand, and his own weakness on the other ; it seems an act of the most astonishing love and omnipotence, that he should ever inherit the kingdom of heaven. He feels it to be mercy and faithfulness, and rich bounty, and unspeakable kindness altogether, from beginning to end, and is at times lost in wonder, love, gratitude, and praise, for so great, so unmerited a salvation.

he obtain not the *grace of the Spirit*, producing regeneration and a renewal of mind.

From the ignorance of this truth, either in principle or practice, or in both, men, professing religion, and holding even some important doctrines of the gospel, become conceited and full of themselves. If the law had read its lesson duly upon their hearts, it would necessarily sink their arrogance into humiliation and abasement. From the want of this teaching, they think it possible for a man to repent of himself, to ask in faith before he hath it, and to do much that even God in his purity will accept and approve. Upon some latent or dormant principles of inherent goodness and strength, not quite diminished by the fall, they presume, that a person may begin with God, and that, after this beginning, God will, in consequence, (absurd as it may seem,) begin with him. This rotten foundation, grounded upon reason, or the exercise only of the argumentative faculties, is the chief support of the false and incoherent superstructure, which, in their further proceeding, they unavoidably build upon it. The basis and the building are truly of the same materials—the proud conceit and unsubdued ignorance of the natural heart. If the numerous ramifications of error were traced to their origin, they will be found, more or less, to unite in this master-error—a vain presumption of the free-will, ability, or rational capacity, of fallen man.

The Lord teaches his redeemed a very different lesson. They are first brought down by him, that they may, in due time, be properly exalted. • He

teaches them the right use of the law, that they may know how to receive truly, and enjoy sweetly, the rich grace of his gospel. In proportion as men sink by the one, they rise by the other. He, therefore, who most lives the gospel, (for it is a life, and not a mere profession,) who most spiritually enjoys the gospel, and in it most entirely gives himself up to the will and word of the Redeemer, is and must be best acquainted with the nature and purpose of the law, and, by its use, enters most deeply into the renunciation of himself. He who mingles law and gospel (a case not unfrequent even among great professors) through ignorance of the right place of either, must proportionably walk in darkness and discomfort, and may, unless God in mercy prevent it, fall into some dangerous errors, the very nature of which tends to harden the heart, as well as to blind the eyes of those who are subverted by them. Heresy is no slight affair, but will spread and "eat as doth a canker." In very deed, every man without real grace, be his denomination what it may, is and must be, either secretly or openly, if not both together, a real Antinomian.

Who then "is sufficient for these things," or able "to direct his own steps?" How can any escape, since all are blinded by nature, and shut up under sin and condemnation through the holiness of the law? Blessed be the Lord for his grace and all-sufficiency! Viewing these in faith, the believer may say with his brother of old, Though "I am not sufficient of myself to think any thing as of myself, yet my sufficiency is of God;" or, with a bro-

ther of still higher antiquity, "Jehovah is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? Jehovah is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" He, who knows what all this means, will tremble to have recourse to the powers of nature, or to rely upon himself; and, of course, boasting will be excluded. Egotisms, or much about a man's own self, rarely become a Christian, and are seldom necessary. Publications of this sort are usually the ebullitions of an overflowing vanity, or the high conceit of a man's own consequence in the world.

CHAPTER XLIII.

On Liberty of Soul.

THE real liberty of the soul consists in a happy freedom from the usurped dominion of sin and Satan. The Christian therefore denies himself, because of sin in his mortal body; he shuns the spirit of the world, because by its sinfulness it promotes his inbred corruptions; he prays and watches against the evil one, because he is the grand tempter and stirrer of all iniquity both in himself and others.

The more this frame is maintained, the more will the heart enjoy "the glorious liberty of the children of God." This is a holy and righteous freedom, which the Christian pants after continually, and which is then most sweetly experienced, when the soul is most abstracted from the low solitudes and

dull satisfactions of sense and time. The Father of mercies is the cause, the Son of his love is the means, and the Spirit of grace is the power, of all the spiritual freedom in earth and heaven, and of all the transporting blessedness resulting from it.

The world and the flesh are a dead weight upon the mind in its possession and exercise of this delightful liberty; and therefore, in the mind's struggles to gain and secure it, the world and the flesh must be brought down and kept down, having, like the devil's jailers, nothing about them but miserable chains and fetters, wherewith to bind and imprison the soul.

CHAPTER XLIV.

On Sickness.

ALL sickness and sorrow arise from sin. If we were not unholy creatures, we could not be unhappy creatures. Because of the ill-habit occasioned by transgression, every element fights against our health by changes and inclemencies; and the very food we eat, while it nourishes for a time, lays the foundation of disease in our bodies, already prepared by their own weakness and ill temperament to receive and increase it.

Sickness is a dismal scourge to the ungodly, and a painful spur to the gracious. To the one, it is the harbinger of terror and misery; but, to the other,

a solemn remembrancer indeed, both of the vanity of all earthly things, and of the nearer and nearer approach of immortal glory.

When sickness comes, and grace can meet it, O what a just representation do they make to the soul concerning the poor honours, riches, cares, and pleasures of this transitory world! How unimportant do all the struggles for power, splendour, titles, wealth, and pre-eminence, which have employed or enraged the past and present ages, appear! How childish and mean do these objects pass before us, for which men have lavished their time, and thrown away their souls! What bubbles, what nonsense, what glaring and horrid stupidity, have filled and directed, have engaged and overwhelmed the counsels of the greatest men; and all to no other profit than a little fleeting vanity, with a rapid descent to lasting oblivion or ruin! Thus the soul feels, when it is quickened by sickness to consider the low and passing affairs of earth and of time.

On the contrary, how inexpressibly great and tremendous do the things of God and eternity rise in full view to the mind! O the worth of worlds, what are they, in some of these soul-searching moments! How is the soul astonished with the grandeur of God, and with the deep and wide importance of all that belongs to him! Wrapt in the solemn contemplation of unutterable glories, how doth the spirit of a man tremblingly examine and solicitously inquire into the truth and extent of its interest in them! And if grace seal an answer of peace upon the heart, how doth it flutter with gladness at its

safety, and how will the whole frame be agitated with a new delight in the sure prospect of an eternal concern in these valuable, these only valuable, things !

The Christian will be wakeningly alive to all this and more, if his disorder be such as can admit of reflection. Blessed be God, however, whether he can thus reflect or not ; yet, being a Christian, his state is equally safe with God through his gracious Redeemer. Whatever be the frame the promise is sure, the covenant of God is ordered in all things and sure, and sure and faithful is God himself to perform it. It is comfortable, and indeed desirable, to have pleasant foretastes and feelings of grace and glory, under the pain or decay of the body ; but they are no otherwise material to the true believer's security for heaven. If he hath not these perceptions during the short time of his sickness, he will have them abundantly after it, if it end in his dissolution ; or, if it do not thus end, the want of them is a loud admonition to make his calling and election sure, in the days that may yet be appointed him.

If we cannot think of Christ, through the power of disease, O what a happiness is it to be assured that Christ thinks constantly and effectually of us ! He "maketh all our bed in our sickness ;" that is, he turns the whole frame of our condition in it for our best advantage.

O Lord, leave me not, poor and helpless sinner that I am, in my most healthful state ; leave me not, especially, I beseech thee, in the low, the languid, the distressing circumstances of infirmity and disease !

Jesus, Master, thou art said to have borne our sicknesses, because thou barest the sins which occasioned them; take, take away from my conscience the guilt which brought disease, and then the worst part of its misery shall likewise be done away. And when, through my feebleness or disorder, I cannot act faith upon thy love, O catch my drooping spirit, carry me as one of thine own lambs in thy bosom, enfold me in thy gracious arms, and let my soul wholly commit itself, and give up its all, in quiet resignation to thee! If thou raise me from my sickness, grant that it may be for the setting forth of thy glory among men: if thou take me by sickness from this world, O thou Hope and Life of my soul, receive me to thyself for my everlasting happiness, and present me as another monument of sovereign grace, before the great assembly of saints and angels in thy kingdom of heaven!

CHAPTER XLV.

On Death.

IT is an awful and a solemn thing to die; and I am sometimes amazed at myself, that, seeing it is not only awful but sure, I can be so void of reflection or recollection, as I frequently am, concerning it.

Some talk bravely about death, and of encountering it with great natural courage, or upon high

philosophical principles. These may indeed defy or meet the sting; but they can neither soften nor take it away. For a sinner to bully death with no spiritual life in his soul, and no everlasting life in reversion, is the act of a desperate madman, who laughs at a horrible precipice before him, and rushes down headlong to destruction.

O eternity! eternity! It is fearful indeed to burst the bonds of life, and to break forth into the boundless and unalterable regions of eternity! Nature, in its senses, cannot bear the shocking reflection, which death affords, either of being an everlasting nothing, as atheists talk, or of enduring everlasting misery as sin deserves. It is grace only which can inspire the heart with a hope full of joy and immortality, that, when this brittle transitory life is past, the soul shall possess a being, happy and long as the days of heaven.

Through Jesus Christ alone is death disarmed. When the Saviour speaks peace and salvation through his cross and righteousness, this last great enemy is no more the king of terrors. He gives up his fearful sting, and destroys nothing about the Christian but sin, and the means of sin.

O how sweet is the smile of that Christian, who, dying in the body, feels himself just upon living for ever! "He is not sick unto death, but unto life," indeed. He quits his cares, his sorrows, his infirmities, and all that could distress or distract his spirit here, and looks calmly into the state before him, where he can meet with nothing but concord and joy, in the society of the redeemed and of his Sa-

viour. He is weaned from the earth, and therefore can part with it easily: he is fitted for heaven, and therefore longs for it earnestly. He cannot but desire that which is congenial with his own renewed mind; and this can only truly and perfectly be found in the regions of glory.

They who afflict themselves (said a primitive Christian writer) about the loss of this life, are like the infants unborn, who, if they could speak, might bewail an expulsion from the womb at the approaching time of their birth; foolishly considering it not as the means, but as the end of being. Men, in their natural state, may indeed deplore their removal from this world, for which only they desire to live; but the renewed Christian is privileged to have a more glorious hope of a life everlastingly pure like God's, and of a habitation wide and beautiful as the temple of heaven.

Lord, when I shall quit this clay, I know not, nor do I desire to know. It will be sufficient for me, if thou sustain me by thy grace now, and if I am divinely assured that I shall be for ever with thee in the world to come. O that this invincible "joy of the Lord may indeed be my strength," when I lie down upon the bed of languishing and death, waiting from moment to moment for Christ, and for my dismission to be with him.

Soon this body shall turn to the dust, from whence it was framed; but nothing can extinguish the life of my spirit, which hath no relation to earth, which cannot subsist by matter and form, and which, in its faculties of will, understanding, love, and per-

ception, is of kin to a brighter world. And O how reviving the thought ! I am not only of kin to angels and heavenly spirits by the very nature of my soul ; but I am doubly related to them and to my God, by being born again and renewed after his blessed image or likeness, through Jesus Christ. I am made by this, a child and an heir of an everlasting inheritance. All that death, then, can do to me is, to tell me that I am of age, and to lead me forth from these chambers of darkness to celebrate my birth-day in the palace of glory. There is in this view (what hath often been tasted) a kind of luxury in dying. In such a blessed, such an animating sense of death, I ought to say, that he deserves quite another name ; or, rather, to exult with the prophet and apostle, “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? ”

Whence then, at times, is the shuddering reluctance I feel at the prospect of dying ? Surely it is because my faith and hope are not so lively as they are privileged to be ; it is because I do not so steadily trust in the truth of those things, which my mind apprehends, and which I profess to be waiting for. Earth is too real, and heaven too unreal ; or I could not thus hesitate, or tremblingly stand on the bank of the brook which keeps me from the fruition of my God. The struggle of my heart would not be for longer and longer continuance here, if my spirit were as firmly persuaded, as it should be, of my inheritance and mansion in glory.

Thou blessed Saviour of poor sinners like me, on thee, and on thee alone, my eyes are fixed ! In

the solemn last hour of my pilgrimage below, O let my eyes of faith be yet more steadily and more ardently fixed upon thee ! And do thou, in the tender compassion of thy heart, which can sympathize with all thy people's woes, look down in my departing moments upon me. Sooth the pangs of death with thy rich consolation and care. Let me then see thee by precious faith, who to carnal sense art invisible ; ready, willing, glad to receive my soul ; and let me pour it forth, in an ecstasy of praise and desire, as into the bosom of everlasting love !—O my God, thus to die, would not be dying ; but only departing to live and to be happy for ever !

So true are thy gracious words, O my Jesus, that “ whosoever liveth and believeth in thee, shall never die :” no, “ he shall never perish, but is passed from death unto life, and shall live for evermore.” Glory be to thee for this rich, this invaluable promise ! Lord, I believe ; O help mine unbelief !

CHAPTER XLVI.

The Recollection of this Second Part in Prayer to God.

ENABLE me, O Lord my God ! to examine myself, the state of my soul, and the reality and growth of my experience, seriously, deeply, and constantly. I am still clothed with a corrupt nature, and there-

fore am always inclined to favour myself; and nothing but thy grace can give me a faithful distrust of my own condition and attainments, or a holy watchfulness over all that passeth within me.

As I have received Christ Jesus my Lord, so I know it is my interest, privilege, happiness, and duty to walk, to live, to grow, and to press forward in him. O keep me from spiritual sloth, or, as it may better be called, from carnal security, that I may run, with the loins of my mind always girt and disentangled, and with increasing faith and patience, the blessed race which thou hast set before me. Give zeal for every duty, wisdom and strength rightly to perform it, and a humble holy resignation of heart to leave all the success to thee.

Make me wise to discern the motions within my soul, and to trace out from whence they proceed. O let me not be deceived by the will or the cunning artifice of the flesh, whenever it would mingle in holy things; but let my spirit be thine own sacred temple, where I may find thee indeed, working in me, enlightening and enlivening me for all thy service and glory, and drawing me, with a single eye, and a simple heart, to seek not myself, not my own pride, profit, or pleasure, but all I want, and all I can rightly have, in thee, and in thee alone. Draw me nearer and nearer to this just and perfect rule of action, to this sweet and blessed spiritual life; so that I may be able indeed to say, and with the increasing confidence of truth, "I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I live in the flesh, is not after the flesh, but

by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself freely for me." O let this be my humble and secret path of life, which none can know but whom thou teachest, and which, for its narrowness, none can walk in but whom thou supportest by thy hand.

Thou knowest, O my God, that I am in the world, surrounded by temptations, opposed by men, attacked by devils, weakened by infirmities, and exposed by a corrupt nature to all manner of evils. Without are fightings; within are fears. How shall I get safely on to the end; or, rather, how shall I get on at all, unless thou art with me? I plead then thine own promise of truth, that thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and at last receive me to glory.

Keep me, while I am in the world, from the envious, proud, hateful, dangerous, and unhappy spirit, which aboundeth in it. Let me have constant proof that indeed I am thine, by having thy life manifest in my mortal body, controlling and subduing it in all things to thy righteous will. So shall even the world own, that I have been with Jesus; and if it hate me, upon that account, as it hated him, O welcome be it, and let me account it as one of my brightest evidences and greatest honours.

In all the circumstances and conditions of my outward life, O help me to look for thy special blessing, without which nothing can succeed in itself, without which every thing may lead me astray. Help me to bear losses and crosses as thy dispen-

sations intended only for my good; and give me wisdom and grace to see thine intention, and to get the good thou meanest by them. If one of thine hands be laid hard upon me, let the other support and bear me up with the more firmness and stability. Restrain all the murmuring and rebellion of my carnal nature against thy holy will, and lead my spirit, by all visitations, to nearer fellowship and sweeter communion with thee. So shall my earthly sorrows be turned into spiritual joys, and all the calamities which can befall me here, shall become urging and successful remembrancers to prepare me for that decaying mansion, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

And when sickness and death shall come, as come they must in a very little while at the longest, O stand by me, my dear and only Lord, in my drooping and needful moments. Make all my bed in my sickness, and overcome the sorrows of nature by the lively joys of thy grace. Receive my spirit, which I commit unto thee, as thine only; for truly I am thine entirely, thine by purchase, thine by grace, thine by promise, thine by the immutable oath of all thine holy attributes. Carry, O carry me to the regions of peace, to the church and general assembly of the first-born, to the blissful city of God, and to thine own habitation, O Jesus, my Lord, my Life, my only Redeemer! Whom have I in heaven itself but thee; and what can I desire, throughout all the universe of thy works, in comparison of thee? My heart and my flesh may fail,

yea, they shall and must fail ; but thou, even thou,
art the strength of my heart, and my portion for
ever !

PART III.

**THE BELIEVER'S OUTWARD CONVERSATION
AND CONDUCT WITH OTHERS.**



THE
CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCER.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

The real Christian loves his Country, and is therefore the best of Patriots.

POLITICAL hypocrisy hath made the laudable name of patriotism almost suspicious. But he that is sincere in the best things, and walks as in the sight of God, will, of all men, be faithful in lower matters, and carry a sterling integrity from religion into every duty of social life. On the other hand, he that regards not God, nor yet other men but as they are convenient to himself, may very justly be suspected respecting his fidelity to his country. Profit and vain-glory, indeed, will carry some men very far, as they have done; but strip a worldly man of these, and where are his motives for promoting the national welfare?

The Christian is not a mere showy patriot, for lucre or for fame; but he is, what none but a Christian can be, a patriot in spirit and in truth, pouring out his secret and earnest prayers before God for

the true prosperity of the land. The world, indeed, hath a low opinion of this artillery of heaven; but one, who is wiser than the world, hath told us, that the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." And if one such person, like an Elias, can be instrumental in drawing down public blessings; what may not be hoped for from the prayers of legions of Christians throughout the nation? We may read what the prayers of such men have done, in Heb. xi. 33, 34.

The Christian patriot will rejoice in all the good done to his country, though other hands, rather than his, have been employed in the doing it. That man deserves not the name of a patriot, to whom the peace, honour, and prosperity of his country are valuable, only as they may contribute to his own.

As the Christian's patriotism is founded upon the pure principles of religion, he is more desirous of his country's prosperity in true worth and virtue, than in mere power and riches, which are often the dangerous fuel of luxury and pride both to states and individuals. He is no enemy to commerce, for a thousand reasons; but an utter enemy to commercial vices, for reasons infinite and eternal.

In wishing for his country all kinds of temporal blessings, he cannot forget to ask, before God, for a greater abundance of spiritual mercies. His heart's desire is, that the gospel and religion of Jesus Christ, happily countenanced and established by the laws, may for ever flourish through the land in its most genuine and effectual power and purity. Though he is not, and cannot be an enemy to any man, yet

he is a well-principled adversary to all wicked and blasphemous errors and opinions, and to all profligacies of heart and life, which flow from them, and which have overrun the country with guilt and shame.

The Christian carries religion into his patriotism, but not his patriotism into religion. The things of God are too holy and sacred with him either to be mixed with, or truckled to, the little low politics of men. He is the citizen of a better country, and a pilgrim in all others; though a peculiar and public-spirited friend to that in which he was born.

As he can say with Samuel, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for his" nation; so he would act upon all occasions, as Samuel did, and endeavour to promote the welfare of his country by being a good countryman. He will contribute fairly and cheerfully to her burdens, live in all godly quietness and honesty among his people, and pray faithfully and earnestly for the whole public weal as a Christian. Were all the subjects such patriots, the country would have but small reason to be afraid of the most mighty and numerous enemies; for who could penetrate the wall of fire, with which God, in such a case, would surround it?

CHAPTER II.

The real Christian is conscientiously a dutiful subject to the King and his Government.

HE that said, "fear God," immediately added, as one evident proof of the reality of his godly fear, "honour the king." Being chief magistrate, the king is God's first temporal minister, who is to bear the sword of justice and judgment, "for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well." The Christian then, living like a Christian, has no just cause to fear a wound. We are commanded by God to reverence those who act under the king, for these ends; how much more then are we bound to regard himself? And if the Christian be concerned for his country, he cannot be unconcerned for his sovereign, who is more deeply interested in its welfare than any other man.

He prays publicly and privately for his king, for his family, and for all that are put in authority under him. It is his wisdom, interest, principle, and duty, thus to pray; because their prosperity is not only connected with his own, but their downfall would occasion the worst of hazards to millions of people. He who countenances strife and sedition, can no more be a true and benevolent Christian than a real patriot and subject; for, by these, confusion, rebellion, rapine, and murder, may overspread a land, to the general destruction, and to the reproachful hin-

derance of godliness and piety. I can find examples of pardon for the most atrocious private sins, in the Bible; but I do not recollect one instance of God's mercy extended to the public crime of rebellion. Indeed, the same word is used in the original both for rebellion and for apostacy from God; and probably because they are almost one and the same thing. Rebellion is an aggregate evil, inducing and involving every other wickedness, and is precisely that offence of the first magnitude, which ruined the fallen angels, and through them brought misery and mischief into this world, as well as occasioned the irreparable sorrows of eternity.

A true Christian values private, public, and religious peace at too high a rate, ever to sacrifice it to the caprices and suspicions of selfish parties and worldly politicians. Corrupt as the world now is, he is thankful for the civil and religious liberty he enjoys, esteeming it a wonderful providence to him as a Briton, above all other men; and therefore he is not captious and querulous because governors are frail mortals like himself, and consequently cannot possibly please every one, nor be absolutely perfect in all things.

In cases of real oppression, the Christian hath a better God to go to than his own passions, or the violences of sinful men, or the evil god of this present evil world, who kindles those violences and passions by his own. He doth not rave, but pray; not swear and curse, but bless; not strive to cut throats for his own self-will, but to subdue his own heart first to the will of God, and to soften the hearts of

others by temperance of conduct, kindness of reason, and innocence of life. "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."

The word of God is the Christian's rule of politics; not the false, fanciful, ignorant, and impracticable speculations of men, who know not their own hearts, and who, deriving all from their own stock, could not have true wisdom or grace, and consequently could not truly and really govern themselves. Whatever principles, temper, and conduct, cannot be "sanctified by the word of God and prayer," are absolutely unholy to a Christian, and strictly to be avoided by him.

CHAPTER III.

The real Christian will punctually obey the Laws of his country, in every thing not opposite to the will and word of God.

INIQUITY, not righteousness, is the object and occasion of law. Without law, so sinful is man, there could be no society, property, liberty, or peace. And though real Christians would, as such, do nothing but right, were there no law at all; yet as the number of these is few, and as the nature of man is frail, and requires order and direction, they cannot

better show that they could live without laws, than by the most exact attention never to break them.

There is only one case in which a Christian can withdraw his obedience; namely, when the laws of men are directly opposite to the will, and word, and laws of God. But he ought to be very sure that they are so, and should rarely trust to his own single judgment; lest, instead of suffering for God, by resisting man, he only set up his natural self-will against that of others, and so disgrace rather than glorify the cause of goodness and truth.

The laws of his country ought to be very dear, at this time, to a British Christian; because he is most unreservedly protected by them, in his liberty, property, and religion. He can now sit, and kneel too, under his own vine, none making him afraid.

A professor in religion acts unworthily, when he strives to evade the spirit and intention of the laws, or to profit by secretly breaking them. It is no act of faith, either to smuggle, or to eat, drink, and wear, such things as the prudence of the state hath forbidden. Persons, who can allow themselves in this licentiousness, ought to examine the uprightness and sincerity of their own consciences, and whether they would not yet further contribute to the ruin and confusion of their country, if the punishment and force, meant for ungodly men, did not restrain even them. The Christianity of a smuggler, or shuffler of just duties and taxes, is as much to be doubted, as the honour and justice of a professed highwayman. It may be added, that the man deserves the highest blame, who, professing religion, can venture to do

what religion and reason uniformly condemn. By his profession, he renders himself both a cheat and a hypocrite; whereas, without it, he would only have been demonstrated—a knave. These are hard and bad names; but they cannot be so bad or offensive to us, as the persons to whom they rightly belong most certainly are in the sight of HIM who hateth iniquity.

CHAPTER IV.

How a real Christian should conduct himself towards the Church of God.

THE untamed corruptions and natural blindness of the human heart, have introduced a great variety of disorders into Christian profession, and occasioned the whole multitude of sects and parties. All believers agree, that there is but one spiritual church, the bride of Christ and the mother of the faithful; but all believers do not act as if they really consented to this truth. What mischiefs hath not the carnal mind produced in all ages! Superstition, bigotry, persecution, pomp, parade, and intolerance, are all of them the proper fruits of an evil heart, uncircumcised, unsubdued, untaught, by the Spirit and power of God. They are the evil and detestable weeds in the spiritual field, which do nothing but stifle, overrun, rob, and impoverish the corn.

There are real Christians, perhaps, in every

Christian church or society; and it will scarce be denied that there are hypocrites, formalists, carnalists, and ungodly men in all. Let the Christian's conscience be free; for God is his only master in these things: but to whatever particular profession he may belong, let his conversation be edifying to that, and let his charity be shown to all the rest. He should be willing to think the best things of any good men, considering the prejudices of education, the differences of situation and temper, and the advantages which God hath given to some above others; and especially considering, that real Christians of all denominations are sincere in their views, and under deep concern for the salvation of their souls. These considerations beget tenderness in every spiritual mind; and the want of this tenderness in any man is no proof that he is not yet carnal. "In things necessary, there should be unity; in things not necessary, liberty; and in all things, charity."

Whatever difference may be in the outward mode or form of real Christians, respecting the worship of God, their life and spirit of worship are one and the same. As believers under the law had the like grace of faith with those under the gospel, though there was a vast disparity in their outward dispensations; so these last have an inward and substantial unity, yea, and uniformity too, one with another. Let each then, in his several vocation, not so much strive for the honour of a party, the love of party being only the love of self; but to glorify Christ with all the gracious power which may be given him. It would be happy indeed for themselves, and honour-

able for the Christian religion, if all its professors were like-minded in all outward things: but as this is not to be expected, while evil can mingle with good, or darkness with light, they ought however to labour hard, on all sides, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Let him that useth ceremonies, be candid to him that useth them not; and let him that will not observe times, and days, and rituals, pray for, rather than revile those who do.

The love of Christ preaches this lesson, which the Apostle of Christ, almost in so many words, enforces and confirms.

With respect to those of the same denomination, the Christian is called in a more especial manner to show forth his works of faith and labours of love, for their comfort and edification. He will see, that the true distinction of a believer in Jesus, is not to rise over all, and to set up himself as a great somebody, but to be their servant rather, showing all meekness, patience, gentleness, and truth. The infirmities of others he must not magnify, but pity and pray over, knowing that he himself also is in the flesh. The attainments of others he must not envy, because these are the free gift of God, which if a man can allow himself to envy, it is only because he doth not know this gift aright. Strength of spirit inspires another conduct. Weakness of the flesh alone leads the professor to this. In fine, whether he be a public servant or a private member in the visible church, he will pray, that he may demean himself according to the settled order, with all gravity and decency, that

he may lay no stumbling-block in the way of the weak, and no offence before the eyes of the strong; but that he may be an example of godliness, humility, faith, resignation, and charity, to all about him.

This, surely, is far better than any nick-name; for this is the true life and essence of what is signified by the best name—a CHRISTIAN.

CHAPTER V.

On the Reciprocal Duties of Ministers and People.

It would be presumption in me to offer instruction to those by whom I would most gladly be taught. My words, therefore, on this head shall be few; and I trust they will not offend.

The faithful minister is the servant, the shepherd or pastor, the overseer, the teacher, the guide, the physician, the helper, and the comforter of the people committed to his charge. It is not, consequently, a light business for light heads; but an awful and solemn concern, which requires all the grace, wisdom, prudence, learning, courage, faith, patience, and godliness, that are dispersed among the laity at large, to be collected, as much as possible, in one particular man.

The profit of the flock, not the profit from the flock, is the grand object of a true pastor's concern. It is the character of the hireling, "whose own the sheep are not," to care only for the fleece: and when

he gets this, the sheep not being his, (which he proves by his want of care for their souls,) he is nothing better than a robber. The world swarms with these spiritual thieves, who sacrifice all the plunder to their idleness, avarice, pride, or pleasures.

What a character doth the Lord give of whom he calls "the foolish shepherd!" He doth not "visit those that are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal the broken, nor feed that which standeth still. Woe," continues he, "to the idle" (the false or foolish) "shepherd, that leaveth the flock: the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye; his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." He shall eventually be without strength or understanding: Zech. xi. 16. See also Ezek. xxxiv.

When any congregation of people have the blessing of an able and faithful minister, how ought they to prize so scarce and valuable a jewel! Such a one is worthy of all honour, both for his work's sake and for his own sake; and those Christians are not wise for themselves, who do not all in their power to strengthen his hands, and to assist him in his ministry.

One good way of accomplishing this, is to pray earnestly and constantly in private for the pastor. This would draw down mutual blessings both on the speaker and hearers, and much endear them to each other. The reason, probably, of the dissatisfaction and uselessness, which often arise between them, may be owing to the want of mutual prayer, which begets indifference or remissness, as well as discovers

too lax a spirit of watchfulness and faith. And then, how can the word, 'on one side, profit; and, on the other, how can the preacher be approved?

The minister of Christ, who gives up all his time, labour, and expectations, to his holy calling, ought to be comfortably and honourably supported in it. The labourer is worthy of his hire; and the very beasts eat of the corn for which they toil. If the maintenance be voluntary, it ought to be the more liberal for that very reason; if it be settled, it ought to be punctually complied with. It is sad for ministers, whose business is of a higher kind, that the covetousness or dishonesty of their people should make it just and necessary for them to attend, with any anxiety, to lower affairs. Certainly, it betrays a want of love to God, when men can suffer his minister or his poor to starve by their dwellings. How can the pastor give himself up to the word and to prayer, when he is constrained to serve tables? And how can he minister without distraction, when poverty and care haunt and worry him all the day long? As a layman, I may ask these questions without suspicion of any interested attachment to an order.

It is a melancholy fact, that the worldly pride and laziness of some clergymen have made the laity regardless of their sacred profession, and ready to treat it with wrongs: and that the spiritual ignorance and irreligion of the laity have rendered the situation of the clergy, in some respects, not so honourable or desirable, as it should be, for themselves.

However these things may be, the Christian hath

one security of hope, which can never fail: "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal—The Lord knoweth them that are his;"—and, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." "God is our refuge and strength; we have found him abundantly so in trouble: therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.—There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God."

Outward establishments may meet with revolutions, and vary, and fail; but the true temple of God shall endure for ever. Yet while Providence hath ordained and settled these outward establishments, it seems the business and privilege of grace cheerfully to observe and support them.

CHAPTER VI.

On Quarrels among Christians.

It is not grace which genders strife, but corruption. If therefore my brother's corruption be raised against me, shall I oppose my corruption to his, and so enter into wrath? or shall I not rather beg of God, that his grace in me may invite the grace that is in my brother, and so we may settle the whole in peace? If we are real Christians, we must both desire only what is just and right, or we do not live like Christians; and if we both agree in desiring

this as the end, how is it that we differ violently about the means? If either have done, or desired the wrong; the other, who is more under the conduct of grace, should kindly and affectionately represent it; and, if he cannot be heard, should leave the matter to God, without raising the unholy and unhappy tumult of heat and resentment in his own mind. He that can bear and forbear most, is certainly most the Christian. It is misery and deadness to a real believer to walk and to war after the base fury and discord of the flesh. When he deserves well of men, and patiently suffers evil from them, then he is like to his Master, and right in himself.

The Apostle directs for believers, not the vengeance of the law, but Christian arbitration. Law is the last refuge, and can only be lawful when right is not to be had by better means.

If Christians, who have a matter of difference, would graciously agree to meet with each other in prayer, and to pray together kindly for each other before the throne of grace; surely, if they meant the attainment of that right and truth which they prayed for, they might soon find it out and settle it accordingly. But it is the flesh which comes in and mars all. One cannot stoop; and the other will not. They are not so wise as Luther's two goats, that met upon a narrow plank over a deep water. They could not go back, and they dared not to fight. At length, one of them lay down, while the other went over him; and so peace and safety attended both. Why should not believers try this method?

But, alas ! while grace remains idle or neuter, the world jeers and triumphs ; the devil is busy and tempts ; good men mourn and lament ; the weak are stumbled, and turned aside ; and a long train of inquietudes and jealousies fill the breasts of those, who humbly hope to dwell with God and with each other throughout eternity. These things ought not so to be.

If my brother be in the wrong, how shall I show myself in the right ? By wounding him more than he hath wounded himself ? By doing wrong likewise, and rendering evil for evil ? No ; let me pray that God would open his eyes, and not shut my heart ; that he would give him more grace, and me more patience to meet what is not gracious in him ; and, at the utmost, that I may not be a partaker with him of anger, or of those sins which may follow upon it.

Am I in the wrong ? What then shall I do ? Shall I persist in it, and make myself more in the wrong ? This would not be gracious ; this would be bringing misery by heaps upon myself. Rather let me go first to God, and then to my brother, acknowledging my fault, or my error, to both. There is no shame in confessing our sins to God, nor any meanness in owning them to men. It is the mark of a noble and generous spirit in common life ; and it is the wisdom, as well as the duty and privilege, of a much better life in the Christian.

O thou love of the brethren, whither art thou fled ! We profess to believe in the communion of saints ; but where are the saints who have this com-

munion? We talk of the unity of God's church with respect to its members; but where are those members who live in this unity? O shame upon us, that we differ at all, that we differ on trifles, that we love to differ, that we urge and promote differences, and that the healing spirit is not more to be found amongst us! Lord, if thou wouldst differ with us at any time, as we are ready at all times to differ with others, O how should we stand before thee, or what could we answer for ourselves! Give, O give more of thy grace, that we may be humble in our own hearts, true and just in our desires, mild to others, and deeply submissive to thee!

CHAPTER VII.

On the Marriages of real Christians, and their Duties in that state.

IT is the voice of reason and religion, that piety must not be yoked with profaneness, nor the true believer with an infidel. When persons have broken through this rule, they have always done it to their own sad cost; as abundance of examples can testify.

Some have ventured upon this transgression from mere carnal motives, pretending at least to hope that they might be the instruments of bringing the other side unto God. Many instances indeed occur, where both parties have married before they knew the grace of God, and have afterwards been called

by it : but the example, perhaps, is not easily to be found, where a believer, acting directly against the rule of God, for temporal ends, hath been blessed with the spiritual advantage of a partner' conversion ; but, on the contrary, hath been vexed with trouble and mortification to the end of life. It may be expected that God will be faithful to his own word, and that they who wilfully violate his order, cannot do it with confidence in his blessing.

This blessing of God is all in all ; and if we have not this, whatever we have beside, it is nothing, or worse than nothing.

When the marriage-contract is made graciously, and with grace, there is every reason to hope for success. The less water of earth, and the more wine of heaven, there may be at the feast, so much the better.

After marriage, begins a life of care ; and consequently the life of faith should be strengthened to bear it. It is a good way for married persons, not only to pray in the family, or privately, but together. Mutual prayers will improve mutual affections, and turn the very commonest blessings of life into spiritual mercies. If Christ dwell indeed in both their hearts, he will not only keep out disgust and variance, but subdue, or remove the causes of them.

As this state requires much and strong grace to go through it properly towards God ; so it demands a larger exercise of charity, forbearance, and kindness than any other, that no duty fail between the first and dearest of neighbours, the husband and wife. These are more exposed to solicitude, trouble,

and a thousand affecting circumstances, than persons in the single state: they are yoked inseparably to meet them, and inseparably must bear them. Now, if grace be not the living and conquering principle in two persons thus circumstanced, there are so many imperfections in themselves, so many unavoidable mortifications from others, and so many evils on every side, that it will be impossible for them to live, in a due degree, as they ought, above the common disquietudes which overwhelm the world. But grace in the heart will double every temporal mercy, soften every temporal misery, and lead them on, with united hands, towards the kingdom of heaven.

What a comfort is it to true Christians, truly married in grace as well as nature, to reflect, that as they are helpers of each other's faith and joy in this world, so they shall be everlasting friends, in a more exalted way of life, in the kingdom of God! They can remain together in this state for only a very few years at the most; but there, no further separation shall ensue: being as the angels of God, they shall live with him and the whole church of the redeemed in unspeakable joy for ever. Their present union of heart and grace faintly typifies the union of themselves and of all the faithful with Christ; and, when they part here, they do not separate in the best sense, but only pass off, one perhaps after the other, to enjoy this union in everlasting perfection.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Duty of Parents.

THE general rule of parental duty is, to bring up children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." It is true, we cannot give them grace, but we can lead them to the means of grace: we cannot give them a new life, but we can correct the old one: we cannot make them to know Christ savingly, but we can, and we ought to nurture them diligently in the ways of Christ, and admonish them in the fear of God. Whatever we can do for them, either temporally or spiritually, we are bound to do; and when we have done all, we must leave them to the Lord. We must not repine, if we cannot mend their outward circumstances; for these are in God's disposal: nor should we faithlessly murmur, if all our prayers and diligence be lost for their spiritual good; for, as this is a gracious gift, we only seem to attribute too much to our own powers and affections, when we unduly lament that our children have not obtained it by us. When we have prayed to God for them, we must trust God with them, and wait the issue in faith and patience. Nature will keep up our common endeavours, and grace will promote a thousand and a thousand prayers. These, when put together, will make up a good stock and foundation, and consequently no bad inheritance for them.

There is a promise of blessing to more than "the

third and fourth generation" of a Christian's offspring; which love for them, and faith in the Promiser, will ever be prompting him to sue out, that they may obtain. I had rather be a good man's child, covered by his prayers, than the son of the first emperor of the world, undevoted and unblest.

Some that never had children, and others that would be wiser than Solomon, or rather than God's word itself, have written books to show, that chastisements should be utterly excluded from education. Doubtless, it requires prudence and temper to chastise properly, and it ought to be done with a secret looking to God for a blessing, as well as on any other duty; but those have either taken up false principles of human nature, or have had but very little experience of it, who presume that it will do very well without the fear of punishment, or that it can be reasoned into all the irksome duties and toils of life. Such methods, we know, will not restrain even grown persons, who certainly can reason, and receive reason, better than children. Corruption is to be checked by all means; and if the gentler kinds fail of effect, as they will in the far greater part of instances, the more severe must be used, but always without passion and in moderation. It should be understood to be a parent's sad duty, which therefore can give him no pleasure, but, on the contrary, pain and mortification. When it is thus performed, it will not easily be abused; when otherwise, it is not really performed at all. The parent's ill conduct, in such a case, deserves a severer chastisement from God, than any that can be due to the misdemeanor of a child.

CHAPTER IX.

On the Duty of Children.

THESE are “to obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Till children have learned obedience, they have properly learned nothing, and will probably be fit for nothing.

As they owe to their parents, under God, their maintenance, protection, introduction to the duties of life, and their very life itself, God hath laid it upon them, as what is necessary in the order of his providence, to honour and respect their parents. Children, who transgress this order, rebel against God. And it hath been matter of great concern to many gracious persons, after they have been brought to a true sense of things, that they have failed particularly in this just and important duty.

Their obedience is to be in the Lord, and for the Lord's sake. This is well-pleasing to God, and profitable for themselves. The only exemption is, if parents are so ungracious and unjust, as to insist upon any thing which God forbids, or to oppose any thing which God commands. Here the most dutiful children must disobey, and can plead God's own absolution for their conduct.

There is one great circumstance in life, which often strains the bond of filial duty. This is marriage. Children ought, if possible, to engage in this state with the full blessing and consent of their

parents. On the other hand, parents should never constrain, and not always restrain, the affections of their children.

The two trying cases are fortune and religion.

As to the former, the discretion of parents is usually of great importance. Children are not to follow their passions into ruin; nor is it the duty of their parents to consent to it. On the other hand, mere lucre should not guide the parent's eye or mind, but the nobler considerations of character, worth, and piety. Where these are wanting, all the wealth in the world is little better than a gilded curse.

As to religion, the unalterable rule for Christians is, to "marry in the Lord." If a parent direct otherwise, the command of God must first be regarded; and though he may have a right to put a negative perhaps upon almost any match, he cannot have a right to command one which is contrary to the express word of God. He likewise hath not a right to sacrifice his child's natural affections in any marriage, even where no objections can be made upon a religious account; because the peace and comfort of natural life are concerned, and because the child must be the sufferer here, and be exposed in the event to some dangerous temptations. On the other hand, (to put the last difficult case,) where the child hath placed affections, in a manner that religion and all other circumstances will justify, but, because of religion, the parent withholds consent; it will be the best to try all means to gain that consent, to wait as long as possible, and with as much patience as possible.

for it ; above all, to supplicate the Father of mercies to dispose the hearts of the parties concerned aright, and not at last to venture on an act of such apparent disobedience, but for fear of greater evils than what may arise from the unreasonable obstinacy, perverseness, or irreligion of the parent. The case is so nice, and may so vary in its circumstances, that the wisdom, uprightness, grace, and impartiality of the ablest Christian friends should be well consulted upon the occasion.

CHAPTER X.

On the Duty of Christian Masters.

IT is far more difficult rightly to command, than dutifully to obey. To be a master and a Christian at the same time, in the direction of worldly affairs, requires more grace than men usually imagine.—The master may soon be acted, and people are commonly very fond of acting this, from the lust of power which rages in corrupted nature : but to command, under a sense of God's authority, the things which are just and equal, and not to be lifted up with the pride and passion of pre-eminence ; this is to give a proof that the heart indeed lives as in God's presence, and that worldly superiority, which generally begets insolence, can be maintained with true meekness and humility. But how can he, whom grace hath not made master of his own corruptions,

expect obedience from others with all readiness and sincerity?

As in a higher case, so in this it may be asked of every Christian master, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" Surely God's providence never raised men into power, that they might show their pride only; but to do good, and to carry on, as far as their power may extend, the welfare of society. If any people act otherwise, they must one day be deeply convinced, that all the little distinctions of men have no natural reality in them, and that there is one common Master in heaven, with whom there is no such thing as respect of persons.

Many professing masters are exceedingly deficient in one great duty to their servants. They give them perhaps plenty of bread, and furnish them well in earthly things; but they neglect to hold out the best of all subsistence, the bread of life to their souls. The omission of family-worship cannot be excused on any account. This, (as one said,) like the hem of a garment, keeps all things together, and prevents other duties and affairs from ravelling out. Servants cannot have grace indeed, but by God's mercy; but they can easily see if their masters do not live graciously, and will readily notice it too; nay, sometimes make from their failures an apology, though a bad apology, for themselves. If masters would live and demean themselves like Christians indeed, and walk in the fear of God, their servants would mend their manners, if nothing more, and we should have fewer complaints than we have, to the disgrace of religion, and the discomfort of our lives. The wickedness of

superiors, like a contaminating disease, infects the ranks beneath them, and hath often brought a whole society or nation to the pitch of destruction.

CHAPTER XI.

On the Duty of Christian Servants.

A PROFESSING servant should get by heart the following rule of the Apostle, and in all his business keep it in mind: "Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men."

Our proud hearts do not naturally love obedience. We would all be masters, and set up for ourselves; and if God suffered this, corrupt as we now are, we should soon be undone.

Is the master a man of the world? The Christian servant's light should so shine before him, that, though he might hate him for his religion, he must respect him for his diligence, dutifulness, uprightness, and truth. Some masters have been won to God by the gracious and upright conduct and conversation of their servants; and how do these servants live who say, that they shall not be so blessed? If the master be harsh, it is not likely that a servant's

sauciness should reclaim his mind, or do good to himself, or bring honour to the cause of God. Let all be done which can be done "without murmurings and disputings;" and if there be no other remedy, it is better to part than to commit the sins of impertinence, or to live in the sins of anger and of strife.

Is the master a real Christian? The faithful servant will render him double honour, and rejoice to obey him on a double account; both because providence hath made such a one his master, and grace his brother and friend. If he take any unhandsome liberties on that account, forgetting his own place and duty, he breaks the order and disposal of God, and lays for his own mind a foundation of much uneasiness. It is a sad mistake of their duty, when truly serious servants imagine, that, by the grace of God, they are to take up a new sort of natural boldness, and that, instead of putting on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, they have from grace a privilege to be insolent, froward, rough, and disobedient. What a wretched thing is it to be said in the world, as it too often is, "I had rather have any kind of servants than professors of religion, because they are always lazy or unruly:" or, "I had rather have any one for my master or mistress, than those who talk about godliness; they are always so gloomy, humorsome, and perverse: in their places of worship they seem saints; but at home they are wolves and bears, and very devils!" O this is a sad light indeed before men; or rather an unshining taper, that reeks only in a smoke and a stink!

The laws of this country, above all others, are so

much in favour of servants and the poor, that the Christian servant is obliged, in gratitude both to God and man, to conduct himself with the more zeal in his service to both. Servants here are considered by the law as equally free in person with their masters, and are not to be defrauded or abused. How then should the Christian bless God, that he hath placed him in such a country as this, where the gospel is freely preached and freely heard, and where he can enjoy his conscience with comfort and liberty? If he hath more work than his master (though that is not always the case), he hath less care, fewer distractions, and is more out of the way of many deceitful and dangerous temptations.



CHAPTER XII.

On the Christian's Duty in his Calling.

IN the conduct of all things, whether spiritual or temporal, a Christian is "called, not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness," and to be "blameless and harmless, the son of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." The methods and practices of evil men are to be no rule with him; but, on the contrary, his outward life and conduct should be a luminous example unto them. He should remember, that though they cannot see or know his inward life or principle of action, yet they are very able judges of the action itself, and

can easily discern whether his temper, honesty, sincerity, goodness, and charity, be such as become his profession.

The Christian's station, therefore, in this life, should be carefully maintained for his Master's glory; for that is his chief business, not only in the church, but in the shop, the field, the house, the closet, and in all he hath and doth in the world; for which end it is necessary, that grace should come into and superintend the whole. Be he rich or poor, high or low; if he live without grace in common life, he lives poorly to God, if at all, in spirituals, and (to say the best) at a very cold and uncomfortable rate within himself. That a Christian should think of getting satisfaction or happiness out of the creatures without God's blessing, argues a great want of faith and experience; and he cannot have this blessing, unless grace attends him in his circumstances, and subjects his will, his vocation, his industry, and all his carnal affairs and affections to God's glory.

A Christian is as much a man of grace at the market or in the shop, as in the church or the closet. He deals fairly and conscientiously, neither defrauding in the nature, measure, or weight of commodities, nor taking base advantages of the ignorance of others. The money gotten by fraud hath a curse, which will either bring torment with it, or melt itself away. There is a maxim, "Buy cheap and sell dear:" and to carry this maxim on, men will wrongly undervalue and discommend, saying, "It is naught, naught," in order to defraud the seller of the just worth; and they will overprize, and put

into a false light, by a thousand false words, what they have to part with, merely to *take in* the buyer. Thus, shop-lies, as well as custom-house oaths, are become proverbial, and therefore trivial, even with some who should treat all such abominable practices with detestation. But how can he be thought an upright man with God, or in the church, who can pick another's pocket by language, which he knows to be deceitful and unjust, in the poor concerns of this world?

The putting double prices upon goods is also dishonourable and unworthy of a Christian. If a man give the higher price for that which the seller can and will afford at the lower, the seller is a thief and a cheat, for all the money in the difference. The law of man indeed will not lay hold of him; but he should ask himself, What is that gain worth, which hath the curse of God upon it? He may be sure it hath not his blessing, because it is unclean and unfair. For aught he knows, it may bring an evil upon all his due profits, and lay the ground of much future unhappiness, and perhaps of ruin. Would he do such things if he were dying? How then can he dare to attempt them, when he knows not but that he may die in the doing them. It is a laudable custom, which some worthy persons have set up, to put one fair sum upon their goods, and to take no other.

With respect to commodities of fluctuating value, the market must be the standard of demand; it being understood, that the market is neither enhanced nor depressed by any known artifice or design.

In all cases of traffic and business, every man oweth justice to himself, and justice to others; and it is his duty to defraud neither. A Christian must be an honest man, and will not wilfully, knowingly, and perseveringly do wrong: and therefore, if any person will thus do and continue to do wrong, as he cannot deserve the name of an honest man, so much less that of a Christian. "The counsels of the wicked" only "are deceit."

Whenever doubts arise upon any subject of this kind, let the Christian do as the Psalmist did—"set the Lord always before him." If a man walk closely in the fear of God, and set up his Saviour for his example, he will very rarely, through ignorance, be guilty of injustice to man.

I believe, further, that a Christian is conscientiously, though not legally bound, to supply all deficiencies in former failures, whenever providence may afford him the power. That Christian seems a very strange one to me, who needs the chain of statutes to bind him to duty; and, therefore, though it may be his case, and the case of many an honest man, to become a bankrupt, but certainly a credit to no man; yet, when his certificate is granted, and he is thereby become clear of the compulsive force of the laws, how can he delay, with a clear conscience, to make good to the utmost any just losses, which others have sustained by him, as soon afterwards as God shall have given him the ability? I have heard of some, and these too were mere men of the world, who, recovering from ruin, had the magnanimity and good sense (for indeed it is both when understood)

to discharge all remainders to creditors, and, with those remainders, the interest accumulated upon them,—and shall one, who calls himself a believer in Jesus, and a child of God, neglect, in a similar case, to do both himself and his Christian profession so beautiful an honour, only by doing strict justice to those unfortunate sufferers, who, by their confidence in his integrity, have every sort of claim to expect it of him? I should doubt the faith of the professor who could hesitate a moment to own or to do so plain a duty.

There are also some professions, which no real Christian can dare to follow. It is not necessary to name them, because they fall under the stroke of one general rule, which every believer in Christ must approve. The trade, the calling, or the gain, which cannot be prayed over, be lived upon in faith, and carried on with thanksgiving, is, like Achan's golden wedge and Babylonish garment, a curse to the owner, and an abomination to the Lord. On the other hand, a small thing, which the righteous hath, is better than great riches of many wicked; and he is much safer and happier too, who, with grace in his heart, hath no money in his purse, than he, who, with thousands of gold and silver, hath the wrath of God along with them.

It is the privilege and duty of a Christian to commit all his present concerns to the favour and blessing of God. He that prays, as well as works, loses no time by his prayers. He that works, but doth not pray, may often expect to labour in vain, as well as in sin, and to bring his affairs to no good end.

“Duty hath much present comfort, and no curse in it;” which consideration alone is worth all the care of a Christian.

CHAPTER XIII.

That Duties are not to be measured by the success which may follow them, but by the word of God only.

WE have much self-love and self-righteousness in our fallen nature, which cause us to expect success from our spiritual or temporal duties, and to be mortified when we do not find it. Whereas, if our minds were perfectly given to the will of God, or in this frail state could be so given, that will would be perfectly our own.

Let not the Christian grieve without hope, if, after all his attention to duty in his common concerns, they may not seem to prosper in his hands; for, however they seem, they do prosper for his real good, and especially if his heart and soul are drawn by any disappointments the closer to God. “God’s promises are not to be measured by his providences, but his providences by his promises.” The Christian therefore must keep in the straight path of duty, and leave it to his heavenly Father to appear faithful in the end, who can at no time be otherwise.

In religious duties, such as prayer and exhortation to his family, the Christian may likewise not

always be attended with success ; but is he, or can he dare, to stop their performance upon that account ? He should remember what God hath appointed him, and he should pray to do it ; but as to the event, this doth not belong to him. It is God's concern entirely. He may indeed rejoice, when he seeth the hand of God ; but he must trust and be doing, when he seeth it not. All will be well with him, and that surely is sufficient for him.

It hath been a sore trial to many faithful ministers, when they have worked hard in God's vineyard and have not sped. But it is scarcely necessary to observe to these, that they shall be blessed in their labour, if not from it. They feel the comfort of God's promise and presence, or they would go on more heavily still. It is an old complaint, " I have stretched forth my hands all the day long to a rebellious and gainsaying people." So Noah was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years, while the ark was in building ; but though it doth not appear that he wrought upon one soul, he was not, however, the less blessed of God. Our Lord's apostles converted more than himself abundantly ; and probably for this reason, that his faithful ministers should not afterwards be too much discouraged, when they see not an immediate or extensive fruit of their labours.

CHAPTER XIV.

On the Deportment of a Christian to others.

IN the first place, "as much as lieth in him," the Christian "will, if possible, live in peace with all men." That blessed Dove, the Holy Spirit, harboureth not with contention and strife, but loveth peace, concord, and unity, yea, and unanimity too. It is by him that men are of one mind in their own house, and in the house of God.

As the Christian is no brawler, so, in his habit of life, he cannot be an arrogant, uplifted, conceited, and presuming person; because such a one, in this arrogant world, cannot possibly be free from brawling.

Not being a coxcomb or forward person, the Christian hath nothing on which to plume himself for the admiration of others. He knows that the applause of men will not follow the true servant of Christ, and that, if it could, it is too dangerous a thing for him to meddle with, whose inward selfishness costs him a constant hard labour to subdue it.

He values men, and desires to value them more, as God values them. The family of the faithful are his relations for eternity; and he will spiritually esteem these above all other persons. He is to live with them in glory. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples," saith Christ, "if ye have love one towards another."

His natural love to his natural friends, is not extinguished by the love of God, but elevated, purified, and increased. He sees more of the real worth of their souls, and is more anxious accordingly for their best interest, their immortal welfare. Those among them, who have obtained like mercy with himself, are more especially endeared. Those, who want this mercy, have his fervent prayers and compassion, because they want it. When he cannot love his friends for Christ's sake, he will not cease to love them for their own.

Railing and evil-speaking he will cordially detest. The good he knows of others he will rejoice to mention, and the harm (unless for prevention of further harm) he will study to conceal. It is a good rule never to speak of men's faults to others, till we have first and faithfully spoken of them to the offenders themselves. This would prevent a world of mischief and slander, and perhaps save many from a disgraceful persisting in sin.

He will esteem grace, and even common virtues and worth of character, above all manner of riches. A rich wicked man is, in a Christian's eye, something like a body bloated with unwholesome fat and disease; not very pleasant to look upon, but much to be pitied and deplored. O what a sordid and dangerous evil is fulness of bread, without emptiness of self! The Christian will behave to such men, with the decency that becomes himself, and with the respect due to their station: at the same time, he cannot be partaker of their sins; nor ought he to miss the opportunity, if providence give it him, to

set before them better riches than they now enjoy, even God's "durable riches and righteousness." Though few of this sort do "put their necks to the work of the Lord," (Neh. iii. 5.) or shall be saved, and it is only possible with God to save any of them; yet the Christian will be more tender and compassionate to them upon this very account. If they are to have their whole "portion in this life," should not the anger, that may be felt from their insolence and pride, be turned into pity and prayer; since their riches will soon be corrupted, and not an atom of their pomp can follow them?

With regard to the poor, the Christian cannot, as a Christian, be wanting in commiseration or relief, so far as it lies in his power. The affliction of their circumstances will reach his heart most, when his hand can do least to abate it. No real Christian can despise the poor. He that doeth this, is under a worse poverty than theirs. "God hath chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of his kingdom:" how then can those among the poor, who are thus blessed, receive contempt from any of God's children? Or how can the poor at large be treated with insolence and cruelty, when the Lord hath declared that he "will avenge their cause?" If a poor man be wicked, he is doubly entitled to pity; because he hath nothing in this world, and worse than nothing in view for the world to come. If a poor man be gracious, he is doubly an object of love; because he is now under many trials in the flesh, which the wealthy do not feel, and yet is dear to God, as his own blessed child and future inheritor of his glory.

To men of every rank and station the Christian will endeavour to render their due: "Custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." Let his own situation in this world be what it may, he is the only gentleman in heart, whatever others may seem to be in outward grimace and manners: "He is gentle, showing all kindness to all men." This is the golden polish; and, without this, the rest is nothing but daubing or tinsel.

It will appear from hence, that the Christian school teacheth the most punctual good manners of any in the world. It inculcates the laws of the purest honour and integrity, and enforces every moral obligation, not by a harsh and unpleasant constraint, but by the far more prevailing and happy impressions of duty and love. It not only insists upon a decent outside, but leads to the correction of the heart, and to the strictest adjustment of all things into a right order within. No lax morals, no licentious conduct, no ill words, no indecent looks, no, nor yet one evil thought, are tolerated for a moment to the disciple of Jesus Christ. He would be, if he could, and he grieves because he cannot be, in this life, all holiness and perfection. Thus, though no part or cause of his final salvation depends upon what is done by him or what is done in him; yet he desires to "abound in all the fruits of faith, which are by Christ Jesus, to the praise and glory of God." And if these things be so, how can any presume to say, "That the doctrines of grace are pregnant with immorality!" It is the ignorance or relinquishment of these doctrines, which, like the absence of the sun, occasions most of the moral darkness, together with

the speculative and practical atheisms, or philosophisms, that now obscure and torment the world.

CHAPTER XV.

The Christian's conduct to the tempted and distressed in mind.

THE members of the same body have a natural care and sympathy for each other: and so have the members of the church of Christ, which is his spiritual body. They cannot know of the sorrow and trials of a brother's soul, without some concern of spirit, or feeling of compassion.

Godly conference and discourse are often rendered the means of comfort and relief. The Lord indeed usually works in this way, that his people may see it to be their greater privilege and duty thus to help each other's faith, and so be joint partakers of his joy. This mutual regard and assistance tend also to unite the flock of Christ, and to make them more and more dear to each other. For want of this, many congregations are like scattered sheep, unaffectionate, disregarding, and careless of their brethren's true happiness and prosperity.

Whatever be the trial or the disorder, the word and promises of God are the appointed help and remedy, which must chiefly be used and applied. If God's word cannot relieve the troubled mind, vain indeed must be the word of man. But experience

shows, that this word, through the aid of divine grace, hath been blessed to the souls of his distressed people, when all other helps have failed.

And as the blessing must descend from above, so all discourses, if not begun, should at least be ended in prayer. Very often in the prayer, the trouble shall be lightened, which the previous discourse did not seem in the least to remove.

There is not a possible case of distress into which a believer may fall, but there is something in the Holy Scripture which can meet it. It is the wisdom, then, of a gracious person, in all conferences with the afflicted, to have a store of suitable passages with him or in his mind, that out of it he may be able to draw what may tend, under God's blessing, to remove or to lessen the trial.

Where the body as well as the soul is affected, proper remedies must be administered to both, and especially to the latter, that it may be encouraged to support the frailer and the weaker part. Generally in cases of sickness, the mind above all things must be attended to; for if that be well, it will not only enable the person to bear the other better, but it will have this noble cordial within, that "all shall be well at the last." It is an abominable wickedness in some physicians, that they order all religious discourse out of the chambers of the sick and dying, lest it should lower the spirits, as they think, and perplex the mind. Are the dying, then, to be deceived into death, if they are ignorant of God and salvation? Or, if they know God, are they to have no comfort of his word, when they have most occa-

sion for it? It is equally wicked to flatter with life, when death itself is at the very door. I remember a man who seemed to have some serious impressions from religious discourse, under a near prospect of dying; but, when a deceiving physician had assured him of his recovery, he threw away all concerns for heaven, received with disgust any mention of the state of his soul, and was found with cards and idle company in the very evening of that night in which he fell specious and died. Did not such a physician contribute what he could to the murder of a soul? And is not this the worst, because the most lasting cruelty?

Certainly religious discourses, at such seasons, should not be thrust in at random, but by discreet persons, or (if they can be had) by pious ministers, who will neither be too long at one time in their attentions, nor offer what may be unsuitable or impertinent.

When the soul is relieved and consoled, every one knows how much it will sometimes contribute to the health of the body. But if it be the will of God to remove the party from this world; surely in the acts of faith, and of the comforts which faith brings, it is the more meet to ascend up to another. Why should a Christian go off thoughtless and sad to celebrate the marriage-supper in heaven?

All trials and troubles are meant to take out the dross from the Christian. By grace they have this effect, more or less, throughout his life: and his various distresses likewise are exactly proportioned to his need of them. The last refinement is in death;

in which he is perfectly cleansed and purified from every corruption, and removed to enjoy that pure state, which is equally void of sorrow and sin throughout eternity.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Christian's Conduct to Old Age.

IT is the Lord's express command, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God." The experience and gravity, the judgment and wisdom, frequently found in old age, demand veneration; and even where these are in some measure wanting, the infirmities and inquietudes of that state, call upon people of younger years to abound in compassion towards them.

I know not how it may be with others; but for myself I ever loved the company and conversation of the ancient, preferable to the gay humours of the young, and have been exceedingly delighted at their explanations and informations of circumstances and events, which no books could possibly have given me.

To this day, I cannot meet an aged person, especially if he be infirm, without feeling some kind emotions of heart towards him; and these are always heightened by an anxious pity, if it appear that he hath not yet felt any true concern for himself. All this may be mere nature, it is true; but, however, I do not wish to suppress it.

The grey hairs of the aged, those "church-yard flowers," (as they have been named,) call aloud upon them, and through them to all men, "Prepare to meet your God." They are remembrancers, to the eye and to the heart, of death at hand, and of eternity to come.

But the ancient Christian is especially to be considered as a venerable pile, respecting his soul, built up in a long course of grace for the habitation of God himself. The Fathers in Christ, having known HIM who is from the beginning, are to be revered, consulted, and, if need be, defended by the younger brethren upon all occasions.

The Apostle, encouraging this tribute of respect to the aged, exhorts, "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father," even when his conduct should be such, as is not to be approved. If these have tried grace and long experience, they have also increasing natural weakness and numberless infirmities, by which, it will be no wonder, if in some instances they should be overborne. Could a young man, with a very large portion of grace, change places with them for a day, it is to be doubted whether he would manage the case any better; though it is not to be doubted, that this experience might teach him extraordinary commiseration in future.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Christian's Conduct to Youth.

A HEATHEN could say, "That the greatest respect is due unto children." He meant, that nothing should pass before their sight, which might either lead them to vices, or encourage vices in them.

There is no need of gloom in any of the things of God. True seriousness wants it not, and is very foreign to it in its nature. It is particularly unnecessary to indulge this sullen and morose humour of the natural heart (for it is seldom little better) before youth or children. There is an easy cheerfulness and benevolence, remote from all silly levity, and highly consistent with grace and the best good sense, which ought to reside in a Christian's heart, and which he might exhibit particularly upon occasion to younger persons. They are to be drawn by the "cords of a man," that is, with natural affections; and though it is not in man's power to render them truly religious, yet surely religion ought not to appear before them, or before any body else, as a poor, miserable, dreadful thing, like a spectre or ghost, to frighten them away from her. They should see, as well as hear, by the example of real Christians, that the ways of religion, or true wisdom, which is the same thing, "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Sourness may indeed be found very plentifully in nature; but there is not one single particle

of it in all the being or exercise of grace. On the contrary, its tendency is to correct the natural moroseness of the human heart.

The Psalmist gives this mild and gentle invitation, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." But wherefore? That they might see good, and partake of the blessings which the word of the Lord most amply sets before them.

Our Lord's benevolence to children is above all comment. He gave an example of good-will and tenderness, in this respect, which not the greatest and wisest of his disciples can think himself too wise or too great to follow.

The sincerest faithfulness to their souls is consistent with the greatest good nature to their persons; nay, we cannot be truly good-natured to them, unless we are faithful. Instruction, even in the best things, may be set before them in an inviting form, without the least deviation from the soundness of truth; and, by a little gracious skill, they may perhaps be led to perceive how deep an interest and concern they have in them. If God is pleased to second the instruction, by giving them a true sight of themselves; it is a known case, that they will love and honour those who gave the instruction as long as they live. And if God doth not bless it to the desired end, yet the piety and well-meant kindness of the instructor will not fail of their approbation and respect; for none can choose but love those, who show any real or disinterested regard for themselves. Besides, who can tell that the seed now sown in

early age, though it seem buried and forgotten for many years, may not, in the secret workings of God, be brought forward into life at some future time? There have been instances of persons, who were favoured with good instructions in younger days, and who appeared to have forgotten God, their instructors, themselves, and every thing else that was good, for a very long portion of their life; but who afterwards were blessed and made happy, through grace, in the very recollection of those things, which, like bread upon the waters, seemed to have been lost, but which were found, and found with great advantage, after many days.

Sin may be checked, nay punished, and yet the sinner be loved. The sinner shall love in return, when he perceives that love occasioned the correction, or rather, that there would have been no correction but from love. It is the same in a higher case: "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth:" and he will not do this, but for those who are truly his sons.

It is very much their own fault, if there be not great weight in the conduct of parents and friends with young persons and children. These, it should be remembered, hear their words; but they watch their example. If the doctrine and life be the same thing, they will regard the former for the sake of the latter, with reverence. If the preceptor divide them, it is usual for them to despise both, and to treat him with censure, or derision, into the bargain.

CHAPTER XVIII.

On the Disposal of Property.

SOME people delay the testamentary disposal of their effects, till the time of sickness or prospect of death; when the mind, if capable of reflection, which is not always the case, should surely be engaged altogether in eternal affairs; and, therefore, for this and other reasons, they are either able to make none at all, or none with suitable judgment and deliberation. The folly and cruelty of this conduct, as it respects either a man's friends or himself, cannot escape the censure of heaven and earth. "Set thine house in order," is a divine command in the preparation for eternity: and the laws of all countries solemnly respect this last instance of attention to social duties.

There are those who make arbitrary, or capricious bestowments, slighting the rules of God's word, the proportional claims of nature, and those reasonable human prescriptions which are founded upon them, and which none but very strong causes, such as the wickedness, idiocy, or certain misapplications of the parties expectant, can properly set aside. Such seem to forget, that, being only stewards, and not absolute proprietors, they are as accountable for the disposal of their temporal goods, as for the acquisition of them.

Others are exceedingly liberal in bequests to public

or private charities, who would spare little or nothing during their own life, or, in other words, from themselves. These pompous bestowments are but too often "the painted sepulchres of alms," raised up by covetousness for a worthless glory: and if there be living and lawful heirs, or unexceptionable kindred, the whole is done at their expense, not the testator's, who has presumed to misapply what he could no longer grasp, and what therefore could be no longer his own, and to rob his friends for the sound of a name, which, in such a case, had been less disgraced if entirely forgotten.

If a Christian should set the Lord ALWAYS before him, he is especially called to recollect his presence in a business, where he may be said to be acting after his death, and to be affecting very materially the future actions and interests of others. When his will is in force, he himself is at the bar of God, accounting for its principle and effects.²⁰ He should therefore renounce all humours, and, in the most solemn frame of a religious mind, ask himself: "Suppose I were standing before the Divine Majesty, would I devise what he committed to my charge, exactly as I have now devised it?" The answer of a good conscience, and of a sound mind, will generally exclude all foolish or perverse partialities, and determine what is honourable for the Christian, and right for those he leaves behind him.

Where there are no other proper relations, or just claimants, people, at least pious people, may equitably dispose of their worldly matters with no other restraints but those of reason and religion. It

would not be unseemly for persons, in such circumstances, to bequeath their property either to pious friends, who may receive or do good with it, or to pious institutions, where it will be done; guarding, however, against idle ostentation, or the vanity of earthly fame. It would be poor, in a good man's view, to have this for his motive or reward. The distinguished Christian, whose honourable name is remembered near the front of these papers, and shall be remembered for ever in a way very superior to the words or memory of man, was a signal example of the widest benevolence, united, wherever the case would admit of it, with the closest and most humble concealment. Large sums of money were distributed, through various channels, to thousands of distressed persons, who never knew, and, perhaps, never heard of, the principal instrument of their relief. He seemed to have a just fear, if not abhorrence, of that dangerous applause, which all sorts of people are ready enough to bestow on persons of this happy character, whether or not they are solicitous to follow their example. It was God who gave him the affluent ability; and he conferred a greater gift, when he gave him the heart to employ that ability, so entirely to the divine glory, and so diffusively to the good of men. It is possible, indeed, for but very few to extend themselves according to his measure; but this is encouraging to every one, who hath first a willing mind, that the performance "is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not;" and, therefore, it may not be improper, according to this rule, and their own measure,

to remind professors of the true religion, that their Lord himself hath said, "Go, and do likewise."

CHAPTER XIX.

On the Death of Relatives and Friends.

It was the saying of a man, who had lost all his children, and all his substance, and who found not one true friend to offer him the least real comfort: "Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I go out: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

This is the resignation of a believer. He refers every thing to the will and work of God; and, having nothing of his own but sin, and nothing to lose by death but sin; all he hath, being by bounty and favour, should be freely offered up to the disposal of the Giver. This consideration, indeed, if by itself and alone, would not satisfy him; but there is another which ought, and, being set home upon his heart by grace, most certainly will: "All providences, whether pleasant or trying, shall work together for good to them that love and fear God." When God loves, and loves for the best end; and when God contrives, and contrives only the best means; why is the mind of any Christian overcharged with disquietude and lamentation, with murmuring and sorrow? Doth he not as much as say by it, "Father, not thy will, but my own, be done?"

"I have lost a friend," says some anxious mind. But who took that friend? Was it not the God who gave him? And hath he taken more than his own? And, if a pious friend, hath he not removed him to the best advantage? And is it not thy great privilege, after the enjoyment of such a one in this deplorable world, to live and be with him again, not here, but in a better? Besides, Christian, thou hast neither lost thy God, nor thy friend: no, nor yet will they ever lose thee. Thy friend, at the utmost, is but surrendered, not sunk; lent, not lost, and shall be found again with advantage. Pray then against the over-strong impressions of carnal sense; for all this is the striving of animal life, of mere flesh and blood, against the Lord; and desire thou to find thy will in the divine will alone. Be silent when it strikes, contented when it denies, thankful when it gives, resigned when it takes away. It is not the gold in the furnace which bubbles and froths upwards, but the dross and the scum.

"I have lost a child," says another. But ask thou, Who hath found him? Is it not that gracious Redeemer, who called little children unto himself when upon earth, and who gave them the highest of benedictions? Hath not this child escaped a thousand evils, and miseries, and sins, which it must have undergone or committed, had it lived longer among the miserable sinners of this world? and doth it not enjoy unutterable happiness with thine own best Friend, with whom also thou thyself hopest to live for ever? And is it worthy of thy love to thy child, thus excessively to bemoan its

deliverance from grief, and its possession of peace? Or rather, is it not the selfish working of thine own too much impassioned heart, which lamenteth its own loss in the flesh, or seeketh its own pleasure more than thy child's happiness, or its own will more than God's? I believe, if thou examinest closely, thou wilt find something of this within thee: but, however, be it what it may, it ought not to be there. It is no fruit of faith; and it can render no profit or comfort to thy soul.

"I have lost a wife or a husband, the very desire of mine eyes, the outward comfort of my life, and my greatest outward support." I would not say, Do not feel any grief, but do not grieve beyond measure. When Lazarus died, even Jesus wept. Nature may suffer for its own losses: it may suffer for the losses of others; and in many cases it is decent to feel, and charitable to sympathize; but nature, if alone, is impatient and blind, especially in spiritual things, and makes all its reckonings from the outward senses. To say to nature, that grace gains where she loses, will never comfort her; and to say to persons who are at any time greatly under the affections of nature, or more under her impressions than under those of grace, that their souls may profit where their bodies have lost, will be dull news, which then, at least, can scarce find a hearing. The appeal must be made to grace itself; and nature, if not quite shut out, must at least stand nearer the door. As grace becomes strengthened and quickened, nature will be subdued and quieted, from her tumult and sorrow. And, therefore, under these trials it

is, that it may chiefly be seen in believers, how strong or weak their faith is in the Lord. I knew a pious and excellent woman, now with God, who, with as much natural tenderness of heart as ever mortal creature had, and with as much affection for her husband as perhaps it is possible for human nature to feel for one every way worthy of her, received the account of his sickness and death without a murmur or a groan, and with only some silent tears, which showed the greatness of her natural loss, the sense of her partner's gain, and the strong and lively hope which filled her soul, of living with him again in a blissful eternity. I saw this amiable and beautiful example of the power of grace, and was convinced by it, how much above all sickness and feebleness of nature it can rise, and triumph and glorify God. Christian, couldst thou have seen this gracious instance as I saw it, it would have taught thee upon fact, how to mourn and bewail the same kind of loss, and how to live upon God; not without a feeling, for that is brutal insensibility, but without being stunned or stupified in the use of grace by the mere feelings of nature.

But excellent as this example is, thou and I have a more sure word of testimony to trust in, that we may get the better of our natural losses and sorrows. God, who gathereth all the fathers, will gather us ere long to the fathers in his glory. If our relatives, our dearest relatives, be dead as to this world, they now thank God that they are so; and we may be reminded of the promise of our gracious Saviour, which assures us, that, respecting our souls and the

souls of all the faithful, they never shall, they never can, so much as see or "taste of death."

Why then should we sorrow as those who have no hope? We ought to be ashamed of our selfish grief, and to beseech of God that he would at least turn it into tranquil resignation, if not into praises and joy. God hath wonderfully supported his people in all their extremities; and, if thou art one of them, why not thee? The youngest child may claim his father's bounty and blessing, though he may not enjoy so large a portion as the first-born. Trust then in the Lord; and entreat him to still in thy heart all the passionate and perplexing tempests of disordered nature.

The intended effect of these solemn dispensations to thyself is, to wean thee from time, and to set thy face towards heaven. There thou hast many friends indeed, and one great Friend above all, who can never be lost; nor can the others, when met, be separated from thee again. They are thy friends, in that holy and unchanging region, not for such a shadow of a moment as thy time is here, but for a blissful and boundless eternity. With what transport shalt thou, one day, ascend to them! With what ecstasy will they all unite to receive thee! The very foresight of this joy throws into contempt all the poor affairs of this world. But O what shall the possession do! Could the possibility of descending again to earth, as earth now is, enter the views of the saints in glory, it would throw a damp into heaven itself, and beggar their unspeakable joys. And yet this is almost, if not quite, the wish and de-

sire of every one who murmurs at the departure of Christian friends; or who would, if they could, bring their souls back again, contrary to their heavenly interest, into mouldering lumps of clay.

It was a noble saying of one, over a dear departed friend: "There he lies, (says he,) and with him all my worldly comfort; but yet if the moving a straw would bring him to life again, without the will of my God, I would not be the mover of that straw for a thousand worlds."

My dear fellow-Christian, mayest thou be like-minded; and, instead of too much bewailing the departure of friends to heaven, let it be one great object of thy life and faith to follow them thither, that thou mayest enjoy, together with them, the common portion of the Redeemed, even the everlasting inheritance of the saints in light!

CHAPTER XX.

The Recollection of this Third Part in Prayer to God.

O MY heavenly Father, when I calmly look back upon my conduct to others in this world, and consider how greatly I have failed in all my known duties to men, against thy holy word and against the peace of my soul, I am humbled to the dust before thee. I have nothing to say for myself, but, with thy contrite prophet, "Unclean! Unclean!"



I have not loved my country as I ought, because I have not prayed for its best welfare as I ought. Intent enough I have been upon its vain-glory, its outward pomp, its carnal dignity, and its national prosperity; but O how little have I been earnest with thee for the greatest of all blessings, that religion and piety might flourish in the land, without which no true happiness or welfare can be found !

I humbly implore thy blessing upon my sovereign, his family, and his government; beseeching thee to grant, with all outward good, the inward mercies of thy grace, and, in thy due time, the life for evermore. Pardon me also for any failures of my duty on this account.

In obeying those whom thy providence hath set over me, O teach me to see how I may best obey thee, and glorify thy goodness for a just government, good laws, and the valuable liberties I enjoy. If those in authority seem to fall into errors, (for what man is he that sinneth not?) keep my tongue from reviling, and direct my heart unto praying for them, that thy wisdom may rectify what human ability could not apprehend or foresee. Deliver me from sedition and selfishness, from all the evils of political passion and resentment; and give peace, I beseech thee, in my time, O Lord !

Enable me to conduct myself towards thy church, thy ministers, and all who profess to know thee, so as to give no just cause of offence in any thing to any man. I pray thee to heal all divisions among thy children, which may bring sad and deep reproach on thy gospel, or lay dismal snares and stumbling-

blocks in the ways of men. O that they might love and pity each other, considering what infinitely tender pity and love thou hast manifested for them.

Help, O help me to fill up all my relations in life to thy honour and glory, and forgive me in the numberless instances wherein I have failed. Let the blood of Jesus cleanse me from all my sins to others; and do thou forgive, as thou hast enabled me to forgive, all their transgressions against myself. Grant me larger measures of grace in the days to come, that I may praise thee more and more throughout my whole life and conversation, and thus live and die to the edification of others, and above all to thy glory.

Keep me from unreasonable and faithless grief, when thou art pleased, with equal wisdom and goodness, to remove the friends of my heart, or the outward comforts of my life. Enable me to give them up without reserve to thee, knowing that no good thing shall be lost either for them or myself, but that all things shall work together for our mutual, our real, our everlasting good.

Having these hopes, help me to be more and more purified from all uncleanness both of flesh and of spirit, and to endeavour even to perfect holiness in thy faith and fear. Lord, I am a blind and feeble worm, and of mine own self can think or do nothing that is good: O do thou therefore work in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure, that I may neither be barren nor unfruitful in thy word or work among the children of men. Help me to bear wrongs patiently, to speak every truth meekly, to carry as

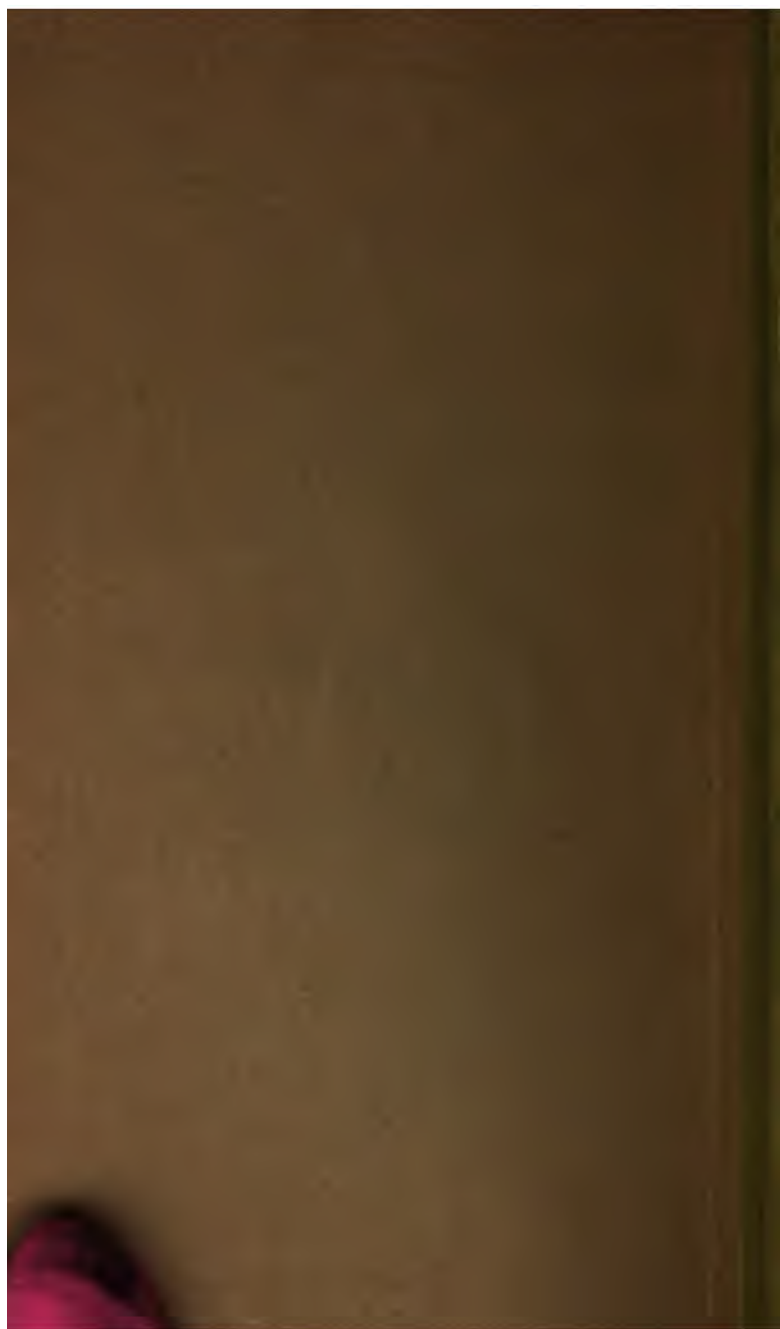
much as possible my whole conduct unblamably, with respect to others, that thy holy name and truth may be exalted, and they themselves be encouraged to seek the ways of thy salvation.

O Lord, I give up myself, all I have and all I am, into thy blessed protection; beseeching thee to do for me and for mine, in every respect, and at every time, exceeding abundantly above all that I can ask or think, for the sake of Christ Jesus, my Lord and my God; to whom with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O blessed Spirit, Three Persons in One and the Same JEHOVAH, be all honour, grace, and glory ascribed, both now and for evermore. Amen.

FINIS.







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